PETS VS GHOSTS
DOES YOUR CAT SEE DEAD PEOPLE?

MARSUPIAL PUGILISM THE HISTORY OF BOXING KANGAROOS

MYSTERY LIGHTS CORPSE CANDLES & WILL-O'-THE-WISPS

CAT NAV AN EPIC FELINE JOURNEY ACROSS AUSTRALIA

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS

STEAMPUNK MONSTERS • HUMAN LIGHT BULB • RUSSIAN CANNIBALS • THE BELL WITCH

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ForteanTimes

FT360 DECEMBER 2017 £4.50

SHOOTING BIGFOOT

50

YEARS OF CRYPTOZOOLOGY'S MOST FAMOUS FILM

12
9 770308 589231

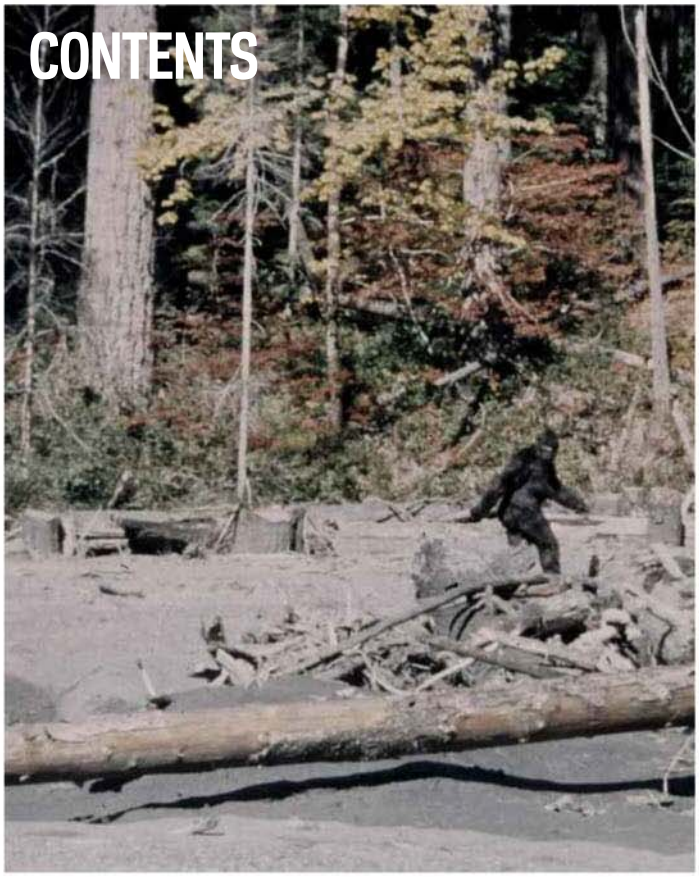
The world's fastest non-motorised device

provides a rapid solution for finger hand, wrist, arm, elbow & shoulder pain

powerballs.com

Use **FT17** for a 25% discount

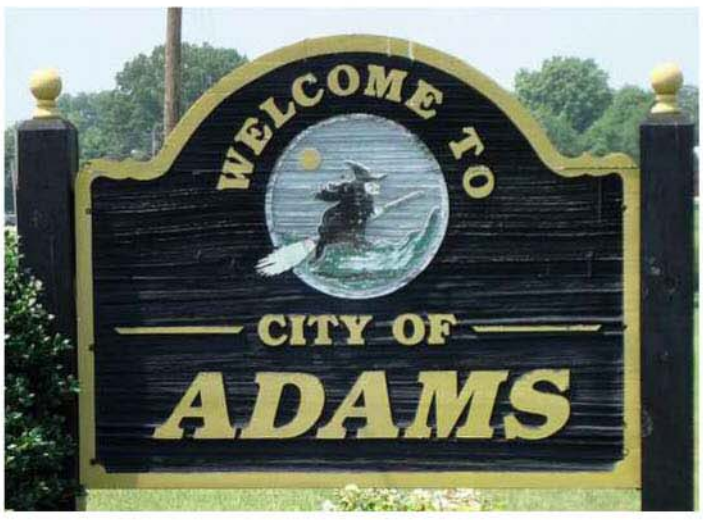
CONTENTS



32 *Patty at 50: The Patterson/Gimlin Film revisited*

46 *East Anglia's mystery lights*

40 *Tales of marsupial pugilism*



52 *An American Haunting: in search of Tennessee's Bell Witch.*

COVER MONTAGE: ETIENNE GILFILLAN

FORTEAN TIMES 360

Why fortean ?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78

STRANGE DAYS

A digest of the worldwide weird, including: Malawi vampire panic, psychic pets, epic cat treks and India's human light bulb

05 THE CONSPIRASPHERE
14 SCIENCE
16 ARCHÆOLOGY
18 GHOSTWATCH
23 ALIEN ZOO
25 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
27 FOLKLORE AND FAIRIES
28 THE UFO FILES

FEATURES

32 COVER STORY
PATTY AT 50

Fifty years ago Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin claimed to have encountered and filmed a living Bigfoot. The resulting footage has been dissected, debunked and defended for five decades. **STU NEVILLE** casts a British eye on an unlikely screen icon, while **TODD PRESCOTT** provides an historical overview.

40 MARSUPIAL PUGILISM

From the 1890s to the 1930s, boxing kangaroos were all the rage in circuses and music halls across Europe and the USA. **JAN BONDESON** explores this strange sporting sensation and the Australian icons who conquered the world.

46 THE MYSTERY LIGHTS OF EAST ANGLIA

MATT SALUSBURY pursues the will-o-the-wisps that have long haunted the East Anglian coast and learns of a possible geological explanation for "Jenny Burnt Arses".

52 THE BELL WITCH, PART TWO

If there's one piece of supernatural lore that everyone in the US has heard of, then it's probably Tennessee's celebrated 'Bell Witch', but its main legacy is a fictional one. **ROGER CLARKE** goes in search of the dark roots and cinematic descendents of this foundational American haunting.

REPORTS

58 BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

A Forger's Tale **THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE**

REGULARS

02 EDITORIAL
61 REVIEWS
73 LETTERS
78 READER INFO
79 PHENOMENOMIX
80 STRANGE DEATHS

ALL HEADER ICONS THROUGHOUT THE MAGAZINE BY CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
(drsutton@forteantimes.com)
FOUNDING EDITORS
BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne@forteantimes.com)
BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
(val@forteantimes.com)
RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON
SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
www.managemymags.co.uk
customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com

FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

You can manage your existing subscription through www.managemymags.co.uk – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription or report problems: UK subscriptions: 0330 333 3492 / customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com
USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 800-428-3003 (toll free)
Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0) 1795 592 909
Fax: +44 (0) 1795 414 555

LICENSING & SYNDICATION
FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT:
Syndication Manager
RYAN CHAMBERS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 4027
ryan_chambers@dennis.co.uk
Senior Licensing Manager
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3840
carlotta_serantoni@dennis.co.uk
Licensing & Syndication Executive
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3998
nicole_adams@dennis.co.uk

YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET
www.forteantimes.com

© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
31-32 ALFRED PLACE, LONDON, WC1E 7DP

PUBLISHER
DHARMESH MISTRY
dharmesh_mistry@dennis.co.uk
CIRCULATION MANAGER
JAMES MANGAN
james.mangan@seymour.co.uk
EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER
GERALDINE GROBLER
geraldine.grobler@seymour.co.uk
SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE
MICHAEL HILLS
michael_hills@dennis.co.uk
GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR LIFESTYLE
ANDREA MASON
020 3890 3814
andrea_mason@dennis.co.uk
SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
BRADLEY BEAVER
020 3890 3722
bradley_beaver@dennis.co.uk
SALES EXECUTIVE
IMOGEN WILLIAMS
020 3890 3739
imogen_williams@dennis.co.uk

PRINTED BY WILLIAM GIBBONS & SONS LTD

DISTRIBUTION
Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide
by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk
Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 788 1272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is $89.99. Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.
US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

12 issues: UK £48; Europe £58; Rest of world £68
US $89.99 ($161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
GROUP CFO/COO BRETT REYNOLDS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERIN O'CONNOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE JAMES TYE
COMPANY FOUNDER FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
ABC 13,904 (Jan-Dec 2016)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
© Fortean Times: OCT 2017

CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

EDITORIAL

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

PHANTOM FAUX PAS

Road ghosts of various kinds have been cropping up rather a lot in recent issues, but in Alan Murdie's Ghostwatch column on White Lady apparitions and haunted bridges (**FT358:18-20**), a bit of a mix-up occurred. We reproduced what we believed to be "a photo allegedly showing the ghostly woman" said to haunt The Yaza bridge in Campo Viero, Argentina. The picture was found on an Argentinian website concerned with this and other hauntings, but it turns out the "ghostly woman" was not quite what she seemed, and hailed from somewhere a lot closer to home.

Sean Tudor, that leading scholar of road ghosts – he wrote on the subject of Kent's Blue Bell Hill ghost for us back in 1994 and 1997; see 'Hit or Myth?', **FT73:27-31**, and 'Hell's Belles', **FT104:36-40** – dropped us a line to say that he had been rather surprised to see this female phantom, as she was one he knew all too well.

"In fact, I created this image as a frontispiece to my website in 2001, which is based on my own photo backdrop of White Hill in Kent (another road ghost haunt), plus a small amount of artistic manipulation (the Photoshop lens flares are self-evident!). I adopted this same image as the logo for White Ladies Press for my book *The Ghosts of Blue Bell Hill and Other Road Ghosts* (2017), which looks at the phenomenon through the lens of Britain's most famous case, and explores similar cases worldwide and the historical, mythological and folklore aspects through the works of Jung, Jaffe, van Gennep and others, to arrive at some new observations on the road ghost phenomenon."

So, our Argentine White Lady turns out to be even more dubious than we'd at first thought – our apologies to Sean for this ghostly mix-up! Sean also notes that there are a number of precursors to the "pillion motorcycle hitch-hiker in the road" explored by Rob Gandy in the same issue ('Uneasy Riders', **FT358:42-47**) in the form of the 'phantom cyclist'. This lesser known subset of the road ghost phenomenon will hopefully be the basis of an article by Mr Tudor in a future issue of FT.

TOO LATE FOR HALLOWE'EN...

...but we thought readers might enjoy this terrifying trio of forteans caught at an October meeting of the Sohemian Society in London by FT art director and roving snapper Etienne Gilfillan. From left to right: FT regular Jan Bondeson, who was speaking not on the subject of boxing kangaroos (see pp40-45) but London's murder houses; your humble editor; and the evening's hostess, celebrated crime novelist and FT contributor Cathi Unsworth. A suitably gruesome time was enjoyed by all.

"SO INTERESTING!"

As we go to press, we're hours away from the release of a mass of previously classified documents relating to the JFK assassination. Under 1992's JFK Assassination Records Collection Act, the 25-year time deadline for the release of files to the public is up on 26 October. While some doubt that this possibly final info-dump will contain any game-changing revelations, there have also been concerns that President Trump – not averse to the odd conspiracy theory himself – might intervene to block the publication of some documents. While the conspirasphere waited, the President sent out the following cheery tweet: "The long-anticipated release of the #JFKFiles will take place tomorrow. So interesting!" Well, we shall see; and once our conspirabots have digested whatever does see the light of day, we'll be back with a full report.

DAVID R SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING

Estimated bills got you in a spin? Get accurate ones with a smart meter.

A smart meter automatically sends readings to your energy supplier, so that you get accurate bills without having to do a thing.

Contact your energy supplier today about getting your smart meter, at no extra cost.

Representative of a typical in-home display. Available in England, Scotland and Wales.

SMART ENERGY GB

A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

STRANGE DAYS

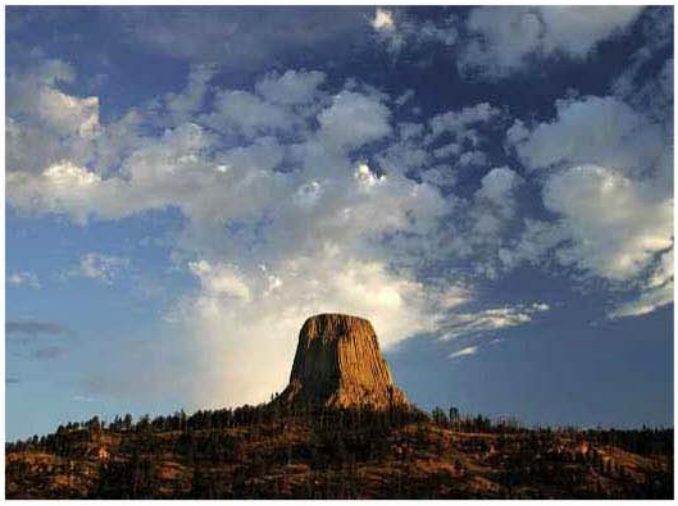
BLOOD-SUCKERS AND TIME-TRAVELLERS

A drunken warning from the future, plus violence against suspected vampires breaks out in Africa

WEIRDNESS IN WYOMING

A man arrested in Wyoming, America's least populous state, claimed to have travelled back in time from the year 2048 to warn civilisation about the imminent arrival of aliens. On 2 October, authorities in Casper, Wyoming, received a call about a visibly drunk man claiming to be from the future. Officers arrived to find Bryant Johnson warning that aliens would be coming next year and that people should leave the area as soon as possible. Johnson was so concerned about his mission to save humanity that he requested to speak to the "president of the town". Johnson had bloodshot eyes, slurred speech and a blood-alcohol reading that exceeded legal limits – but the alleged time-traveller had a perfectly logical explanation: the only way the aliens could send him back in time was to fill his body with alcohol and making him stand on a giant pad. He was arrested nonetheless.

Just a few weeks earlier in Crook County, Wyoming – less than 200 miles from Casper – the first annual Devils Tower UFO Rendezvous was held. Devils Tower (pictured above) is the rock formation at the centre of Spielberg's film *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this November.) The festival featured a parade, a costume contest and a range of speakers that included UFO investigators, supposed alien abductees and others who had studied the possibility of extraterrestrial life. On the western side of the state, the earthquake swarm that had been rocking the Yellowstone



B_J / CREATIVE COMMONS

National Park supervolcano since last June was one of the longest such swarms ever recorded. In a span of three and a half months, there had been over 2,500 quakes, causing concerns about an eruption of the supervolcano – although experts said that the quakes in no way indicated that an eruption was imminent. *Newsweek, 5 Oct 2017.*

VAMPIRES IN MALAWI

In late October, police in Malawi arrested 140 members of lynch mobs who had attacked people suspected of being vampires. At least nine people were thought to have been killed, including an epileptic man burned to death and another person stoned to death in the country's second-biggest city, Blantyre. Two others were arrested for threatening to suck people's blood, but police said they had no medical reports of any actual bloodsucking. Vigilante killings started on 16 September in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts, when three people suspected of being blood-suckers were killed by a mob. The government imposed a nocturnal curfew to prevent further killings. Some residents – including health officials, teachers and traditional leaders – said their homes had been destroyed following speculation they were looking after "vampires". Police chief Lexon Kachama said: "The biggest challenge is that thieves and robbers have now taken advantage of the situation and are mounting illegal roadblocks at night in order to harass people."

Traditional leaders in southern Malawi believe the trouble started across the border in Mozambique where rumours of blood-sucking had led to violence. Protesters there had targeted police whom they believed were protecting the supposed vampires, leading to the flight of a northern town's administrator. The villagers in these areas believe human blood-sucking is a ritual practised by some to become rich, and that magical powers were preventing them from catching the supposed vampires.

If these communities believe in "mysterious magical explanations for things, then people will tend to attribute their difficulty to what they call blood-suckers," said Dr Chioza Bandawe, a clinical psychologist at the University of Malawi, adding that for some this represented "the life and the hope being sucked out of them." James Kaledzera, Malawi's national police spokesperson, announced that police patrols had been stepped up in areas affected, and that they would "arrest anybody who is deemed to have taken part in the killings".

A few days earlier, on 9 October, the UN had instructed staff to move to safer areas. "Some UN staff have relocated while others are still in the districts depending on locations of their operations," said the acting UN resident coordinator, Florence Rolle. "UNDSS [the UN Department on Safety and Security] is continuing to monitor the situation closely to ensure all affected UN staff are back in the field as soon as possible." Rolle did not say how many workers had been relocated.

President Peter Mutharika, who visited the areas concerned, vowed to investigate the killings. Belief in witchcraft is widespread in rural Malawi, one of the world's poorest countries, where many aid agencies and NGOs work. A spate of vigilante violence linked to vampire rumours also erupted in 2002. *[R, AFP] 9 Oct; Metro, NBC News, 10 Oct; BBC News, 11+20 Oct; Sky News, 20 Oct 2017.*

THE SOUND OF VIOLENCE

Sonic attacks on US diplomats in Cuba

PAGE 14

PARANORMAL PETS

Psychic dogs and cats who see ghosts

PAGE 18

AUTUMNAL UFOS

The significance of the 'falling leaf' effect

PAGE 29

THE CONSPIRASPHERE

America's latest mass shooting incident was as profoundly mysterious as it was shocking – and fertile ground for conspiracy theory, notes NOEL ROONEY...

THEATRE OF CRUELTY

The Las Vegas shootings, on 1 October, triggered the expected slew of conspiracy-oriented reactions (some videos and posts were up and running while the incident was still in progress) and the usual range of theories: the whole thing was a hoax, performed by crisis actors and compliant police; it was a false flag attack by the Deep State designed to deprive God-fearing Americans of their God-given right to carry guns; it was an FBI anti-terrorist sting gone awry, 'accidentally' arming an ISIS cell that proceeded to use the weaponised bait ahead of schedule.

There is, it appears, more to this tragedy than many of the mass shootings that preceded it. The mainstream narrative carries its own burden of problematic, if not implausible, elements, that both provide additional grist for the conspiratorial mill (as if that were needed) and undermine public confidence in the apparatus of state. And in the alleged perpetrator, Stephen Paddock, we may have an updated Lee Harvey Oswald in the making. Whether he becomes a niche character, a kaleidoscopic fragment in the byzantine library of obsessive specialisms that lurk in the undergrowth of the Conspirasphere, or he is elevated to the status of iconic uncertainty, residing forever where the ghosts of Oswald, JFK, and others, adumbrate the grand narrative, remains to be seen.

Almost everything about this tragedy is contested, both in the mainstream and the Conspirasphere. The regular battles for ownership of the hidden truths manifest in gruesome public spectacles (and this event has seriously raised the achievement bar for pointless atrocity) are playing out; the hoax theory, for instance, was quickly quashed by other conspiracists (who nonetheless left a little room for crisis actors, as if these ghoulish appurtenances were necessary to the fabric of alternative reality). A greater imperative intruded; the victims of the shooting were the same God-fearing, gun-toting, Trump-voting folks as the conspiracists, and their pain was real.

Questions also haunt the mainstream narrative, which has shifted significantly in the weeks following the shooting. How did Paddock accumulate such a huge arsenal without attracting official attention? How did he manage to smuggle that extraordinary amount of weapons, ammunition, and surveillance equipment into a premier hotel in the heart of Las Vegas, and then set up his deadly nest and maintain it for several days unnoticed by security staff and hotel workers? How did a man with no military experience manage to inflict such heavy casualties, from such a distance, using a bunch of partly modified rifles? What connection did he have to ISIS, or to the shadowy US security world? What was the purpose of the weapons and explosives found in his car after the shooting?

It is here, at the point where big events, inconsistent official narratives, and public fear and uncertainty meet, that the larger edifices of conspiracy theory are constructed. Throw in a main character whose family background (his father was reportedly on the FBI's most wanted list), travels to countries pivotal to the activities of Islamic terrorists and their backers, and possible links to clandestine US security operations, suggest an almost shamanic potential for shape-shifting, and we can see the possibility that the Las Vegas shootings may become a canonical chapter in the grand narrative of the Conspirasphere. Small comfort to the victims, and likely only an increment in the trajectory of the theatre of cruelty that is American gun crime; but perhaps a step change in the theology of conspiracy theory.

www.rense.com/general96/lasvegasgladio.html; www.infowars.com/vegas-shooting-an-isis-attack-evidence-suggests/; www.rense.com/general96/isisgunmanvegas.html

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

13 DEAD IN CAKE INFERNO

Sun, 7 Aug 2016.

Shakespeare's ghost tackles shop raiders

D.Telegraph, 8 Sept 2016.

FISH SWALLOW COUPLE IN COURT

Western Daily Press, 3 Nov 2016.

Who knew it would get so weird so quickly?

Irish Times, 30 Jan 2017.

DWARF LEPRECHAUN AT TEEN DISCO IS FLASHER

Sun, 28 Mar 2017.

Smartphones threaten satsumas

<i> 10 Dec 2016.

SKETCHING BIGFOOT

On 20 October 2011, the 44th anniversary of the famous Patterson-Gimlin sighting and film, a Wildman Life Drawing Class took place at London's Horse Hospital. It was organised by Stephen Fowler, to coincide with artist Ronnie Long's exhibition 'My Life On Earth', curated by Matthew Killip.

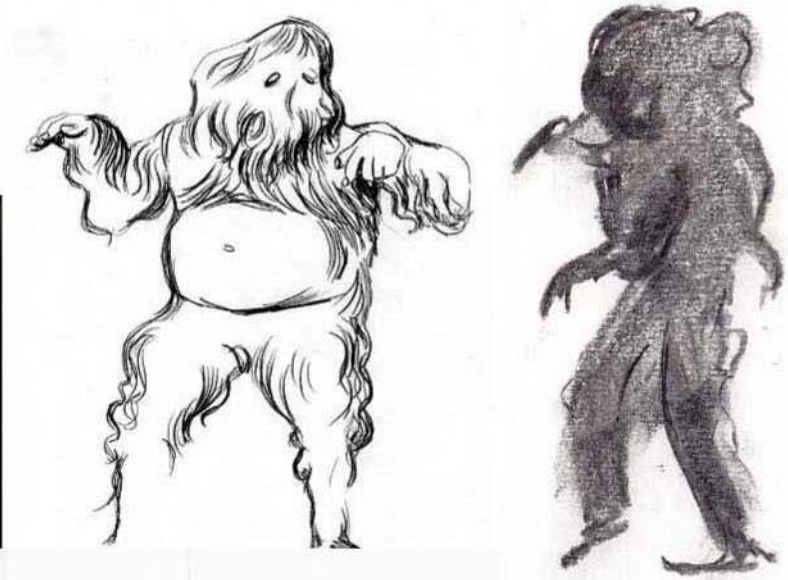
A key part of Long's exhibition was a series of paintings illustrating his childhood dreams of Bigfoot walking around his home whilst Long slept soundly. The inspiration for the drawing class was Joshua Blu Buhs's book *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend*, and in particular the material on PT Barnum's travelling show of the 1860s, which billed a supposedly captive Wildman as 'What-is-it'.

Like many people who were born or grew up in the 1970s, Fowler has always been fascinated by Bigfoot, and believed that taking the fabled creature out of his sketchbook and into the 'real' world would make for an interesting experience for all concerned. Participants in the class said it was a bit like going to Santa's grotto: part of you knows it's a man dressed up, but another, perhaps more important, part of you is consumed by the magic as you find yourself in front of a real Wildman. Fowler explained how "shamanistic" it felt "when putting my arm around him and introducing him to the participants, I noticed my friend Nick had turned into a Wildman". Later in the evening the Wildman was joined by a bear (well, Fowler dressed up as one).

Since his first outing, the Wildman has visited the Hayward Gallery (as part of the Wide Open School) accompanied by Sasquatch and Wildboy, and Turner Contemporary, Margate, (in the *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing* exhibition) accompanied by a Wildwoman and Wildbaby

The next Wildman Life Drawing Class will be taking place at this year's Illustration & Graphic Design workshop festival GÖRA! (MAKE!) which runs from 8-10 November in Stockholm, Sweden.

RIGHT: Stephen Fowler with Nick Abrahams as Bigfoot.
BELOW: All images by Etienne Gilfillan except botttom left courtesy Stephen Fowler.
OPPOSITE PAGE: (clockwise from top) Photo by Etienne Gilfillan. Illustrations: Paul Bommer, Geoff Coupland, Geoff Coupland, Paul Bommer, Rosie Wolfenden.



SIDELINES...

SATANIC ROSARIES

Talking on the radio show *Hello Father 911*, Father Ambrosio Nonato Legaspi, chief exorcist of the Philippines, warned listeners that their rosaries might be "infested or cursed", and were being given away by Satanists, acting as part of "the Illuminati". Whoever used them, he warned, would be "followed by evil spirits". Another exorcist, Philippe De Guzman, said the rosaries often contained hidden symbols, such as pentagrams and snakes, and had to be exorcised. *philippineslifestyle.com, 4 Sept 2017.*

IMPERSONATING A GHOST

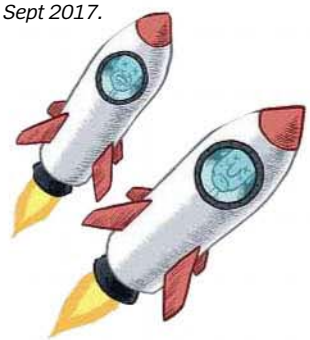
Anthony Stallard, 24, had been out drinking with friends when they went to Kingston cemetery in Portsmouth and started to play football. Witnesses complained that Stallard pretended to be a ghost, "throwing his arms in the air and saying woooooo!" He pleaded guilty at Portsmouth magistrates' court to using threatening words or behaviour likely to cause distress. He was fined £35 and ordered to pay a £20 victim surcharge and £20 in costs. *Guardian, 11 Aug 2017.*

AVIAN MUGGER

A crow grabbed a passport at a border crossing between Estonia and Russia, forcing a flustered guard to give chase. The bird got way, but the passport was found days later in nearby Ivangorod, Russia. *Metro, 4 Jan 2017.*

TO COLDLY GO...

Russian scientists plan to blast cryogenically frozen corpses into space in the hope of one day bringing them back to life when cures for diseases such as cancer are found. It will coast £250,000 per person. DNA samples and frozen pets could also be put into orbit. *D.Mirror, Metro, 1 Sept 2017.*



MARTIN ROSS

CAT NAV

Our periodic round-up of epic feline journeys, including one missing mog's 1,900-mile trek across Australia

ARMAGH CATS PROTECTION

ABOVE LEFT: Jacob Richter and Holly. **TOP RIGHT:** Jessie. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Tigger, aka Ozzie. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** George plans a trip.

In November 2012, Jacob and Bonnie Richter brought their four-year-old tortoiseshell cat, Holly, along on a road trip to the Daytona International Speedway, 190 miles (306km) north of their home in West Palm Beach, Florida. Spooked by fireworks one night, Holly bolted from the Richters' motor home. For days, her frantic owners handed out flyers and alerted local agencies, before finally heading home, distraught and without Holly. Then, on New Year's Eve, about two months later, Barb Mazzola found a cat in her Palm Beach Gardens yard, too weak even to miaow. She put out food and milk and after six days managed to coax the emaciated animal inside. "She was so skinny, all bones and weak and she could hardly walk," Mazzola said. She took her to a vet, where she was scanned for a microchip.

The Richters had the shock of their lives when they heard that Holly had been found, and only one mile from their home. How the cat, which rarely ventured outside the Richters' house, managed to make the lengthy journey baffled animal behaviourists. What seems certain, judging from the state of her paws, is that she walked home. Her back feet, the ones cats use to propel themselves, were swollen and the claws were worn down to stubs. She had shed half her 13lb (5.9kg) body weight and was severely dehydrated. *ABC News, 13 Jan; Sydney Morning Herald, 21 Jan; Sunday Telegraph, 27 Jan 2013.*

• In 2010, Sheree Gale and her husband Andre moved from Ungarra on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia to Berry Springs near Darwin in the Northern Territory, a distance of about 1,900 miles (3,000km). In March they arranged for their tabby cat Jessie to join them. The long flight took the pet from Port Lincoln to Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane and Darwin. Two other cats remained behind in Ungarra, with the agreement of the new owners, Troy and Jenn Humby. After a couple of weeks in Berry Springs, Jessie disappeared. More than a year later, in May 2011, she turned up at her old home and was taken in by the new owners. "I thought it was strange because this cat was hanging around with the other two cats and I thought a wild one wouldn't do that," said Mrs Humby. "I took a photo and sent it to Sheree and she said it was definitely Jessie. I just can't believe it." Mrs Gale said the cat had the same mannerisms and answered to the name Jessie. "She hates getting into cars, so I think she has walked," she said, adding that a heavy rainfall and a mouse plague in Central Australia might have helped Jessie survive the Outback. Still, it's an awfully long way. *(Adelaide) Sunday Mail, 6 Nov; Sun, 7 Nov 2011.*

• Marna Gilligan and Sean Purdy of south London adopted a black and white kitten aged about five months, and named her Moon Unit after Frank Zappa's daughter. She disappeared after a New Year's party in 2008. They searched in vain for months; numerous tip-offs led nowhere. Almost eight years later, in June 2016, they received an email to say

a shelter in Paris had taken in their cat, which had been found at a suburban railway station, about 280 miles (450km) from where she had last been seen. The couple (who no longer live together) had been tracked down via microchip to their former Bermondsey address and they recognised Moon Unit's distinctive nose markings in photos. How she had made it to France was a mystery. They travelled to Paris together to collect her, and she now resides with Mr Purdy in Deptford. *Eve. Standard, 26 July; Times, D.Telegraph, 27 July; D.Express, 28 July 2016.*

• George, an 18-year-old tabby, went missing from his home in Llanrwst, North Wales, on Mother's Day weekend in 2015 before being reunited with his owners in Brighouse, Yorkshire, 128 miles (206km) away five weeks later, on 11 April. His owners, Steven and Susan Davison, couldn't believe their luck when daughter Gemma Lemalle saw a picture of the pet on a "lost and found" Facebook page. Mrs Lemalle got in touch with Julia Hill, who had found George near her home and George was reunited with his family. *D.Telegraph, Times, 18 April 2015.*

• A geriatric ginger cat was found wandering the streets of Laurelvale, County Armagh, Northern Ireland, in June 2015 and was taken to the local Cats Protection Centre. The starving animal was put on a drip after suffering from kidney failure. A microchip showed he was registered in Sydney, Australia, in 2000 as 'Tigger', and had been born in 1989, making him an impressive 26 years old (though someone suggested the birth year was a 'typo' for 1999). He had evidently been cared for in the past, since he was wearing a collar. The data also showed he had turned up as a stray in a vet's clinic in London in 2004, but his owner could not be traced. He was renamed Ozzie by his rescuers. How he had travelled 11,000 miles (17,700km) to London from Down Under was unknown – as indeed was how he had crossed the Irish Sea. *Sun, (Sydney) D.Telegraph, 19 June; D.Mail, 20 June 2015.*

• A cat who evidently didn't like his owner's new home found his way back to his old flat, 500 miles (800km) away. Marquis went missing after owner Tatiana Tishenko moved to Volgodonsk. Two years later, she had a phone call from a friend in the city of Dnipropetrovsk saying she had seen the cat outside her old home. *Metro, 28 April 2003.*

• A brown and ginger tomcat, aged about seven, turned up on Laura Spear's doorstep in Newton Abbot, Devon. She took him to a vet, who discovered he had been microchipped in Israel, 3,000 miles (4,800km) away. *Sunday People, 6 Nov 2014.*

• Anthony Lewis and his wife Sam gave up their pet cat Maisy to the buyers of their home in the Languedoc region of southern France because they didn't want to put her through the upheaval of moving 700 miles (1,127km) north to Jersey. However, they were amazed when four-year-old Maisy turned up in the van delivering some of their belongings to the Channel Island three months later. She had sneaked aboard the van and gone without food or water for two days as it travelled across France. "I loaded the van up in the middle of the night and when I got to Jersey left it in the depot overnight," said the delivery driver, Tim Morley, 44. "When I went back I could hear faint crying from the van and saw the cat. I put food down and she came out. Then I rang Anthony and described the cat. He said it sounded just like Maisy." And so she proved. *Sun, D.Star, 16 Nov 2002.*

• Wildlife officials described as "incredible" the 2,000km (1,240 mile) journey home of a tuft-eared wildcat captured as a young adult in British Columbia in 2003 and transported to Colorado for a lynx-reintroduction programme – where it sired at least six offspring – before being trapped in January 2010 in Alberta. Its homeward-bound cross-border odyssey to Canada, culminating with its death in a trap line north of Banff National Park, was the longest ever recorded for the species – by far. The nine-year-old lynx, known as specimen BC-03-M-02, must have crossed countless highways, numerous mountain ranges and probably a stretch of northwest Colorado desert. *Times Colonist (Victoria, BC), 10 April 2010.*

Over the years, FT has noted many epic feline journeys; there was Minosch, who travelled 1,500 miles (2,400km) from Turkey to Germany in 1981; Sam, who made the same distance from Arizona to Wisconsin in 1987-91; and dozens more [**FT61:46-49, 199:14-15, 282:24-250**].

CHRIS BULL / CATERS NEWS

SIDELINES...

EYEBALL IDIOTS

A health professional in California reported cases where people sought medical treatment after putting sunscreen on their eyeballs to view the solar eclipse on 21 August, because they did not have the NASA-approved eyewear. *Fox News, 28 Aug 2017.*

A SORT OF INCUBUS

Last February, the *Manica Post*, a state-run newspaper in Zimbabwe, reported that 'Tokoloshes' had been having forced sexual intercourse with two female teachers at Chishuma Primary School in Odzi, eastern Manicaland province, since the previous June. The teachers said a local pastor had conducted prayers to drive away the "mysterious human-like objects", but without success. *bulawayo24.com (Zimbabwe), 7 Feb 2017.*

HORNS ALLOWED

Phelan Moonsong, a pagan priest, has been allowed to sport goat horns in his US driver's licence photo. Mr Moonsong, from Maine, always wears his goat horns unless he is sleeping or bathing. They serve as his spiritual antennæ and help him educate others about paganism. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 21 Dec 2016.*

DOWNSIZING

To raise money for a nursing home, estate agents Peter Clarke & Co in Shipston, Warwickshire, advertised a six-room Georgian mansion, with a coach house, orchard and paddock set in two acres – for just £500. It was bad news for a punter who thought he'd found the bargain of the century: the building is just 30in (76cm) high and 36in (91cm) wide and is designed for dolls. *Sunday Telegraph, 6 Aug 2017.*

POWER CUT BY FISH

A falling fish knocked out power to nearly 200 customers in Seattle for about two hours on 14 December 2016. The electrocuted fish (probably a salmon) was found on the ground below the power lines. It was assumed that one of the eagles or ospreys that routinely hunt in the nearby Duwamish River had dropped it. *[AP] 15 Dec 2016.*

SIDELINES...

PLAYING WITH FIRE

Devon Doucette, 21, burned down his parents' house in Old Orchard Beach, Maine, while trying to exterminate ants in the basement with matches. He was treated and released for smoke inhalation and burns. The fire killed the family pets – two cats and a dog. *[AP] 20 Mar 2017.*

FARM MASSACRE

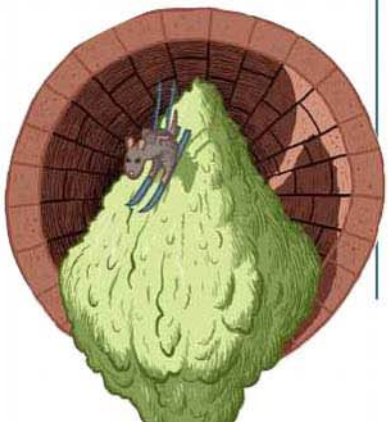
Jared Blackwelder finished milking his cows near Cabool in Texas just before dawn on 29 April when lightning struck. "It was so bright I couldn't hardly see," he said. "It just brought fire down the fences." When he returned to the field later to milk the cows again, he found 32 of them dead. A vet confirmed they had been struck by lightning. That left him with 120 cows. *Springfield (Missouri) News Leader, 1 May 2017.*

SUN KISSED

One day in 1997, Sila Sutharat, from Phetchaburi in Thailand, was hit by the sunlight reflected off the window of a passing bus, and felt its heat. This gave him the idea to roast chicken with sunlight, which he has now been doing for 20 years. Instead of a charcoal fire, he uses 1,000 mobile mirrors that concentrate sunlight into a strong beam, which exceeds 300° Centigrade (572°F). *odditycentral.com, 14 June 2017.*

MONSTER FATBERG

A 250m-long "fatberg" weighing 130 tonnes (the same weight as 11 double-decker buses) was found blocking a sewer in Whitechapel Road, east London. The solid mass of congealed fat, wet wipes, nappies, oil and condoms – as hard as concrete – formed in the Victorian-era tunnel and was one of the largest ever found. It would take three weeks to remove, using high-pressure hoses. *BBC News, 12 Sept 2017.*



MARTIN ROSS

MEDICAL BAG

India's electricity eating "Living Light Bulb" and the man who swallowed a traffic cone

COVER ASIA PRESS / FAISAL MAGRAY

ABOVE: Naresh Kumar, "India's Living Light Bulb", says he draws most of his energy from electrical sources.

WATTS FOR DINNER?

Naresh Kumar, 42, from Muzzafarnagar in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, claims that he is naturally insulated against high voltage electricity, and furthermore that he can draw energy directly from electricity, obviating the need for regular food to survive. One day at work he touched a live wire by mistake, but nothing happened. He decided to explore his "superpower" by grabbing even more live wires and eventually realised that he could use electricity as an alternative to traditional food. "Whenever I feel hungry and there's no food in the house I hold naked wires and within half an hour I'm satisfied," he said. "I eat electricity like it's food. I can touch any electrical appliance like a television, washing machine, fridge, and an inverter with my bare hands and it doesn't affect me. In fact it helps my energy levels. I think about 80 per cent of my body is composed of electricity now." His house is full of live wires that let him tap into his favourite energy source whenever he likes. "There are no switches, and sometimes my children and I fear we'll get an electric shock," his wife said. "But because he's obsessed with touching naked wires they are left like this. He even uses his bare hands to switch different appliances on and off." Videos of Naresh holding live wires in his hands or his mouth have been doing the rounds of social media, and he's been dubbed "India's Living Light Bulb".

> *"About 80 per cent of my body is composed of electricity now"*

Fortean Times has reported on several cases of electrical immunity, the first being Bulgarian electrician Georgi Ivanov, who never bothered to switch off the mains when doing repairs. He had never had a shock, only a tingling sensation. In 1984 he was tested in a Sofia hospital, where it was found he could take up to 380 volts without discomfort [**FT43:4**]. However, this is the first time the Gang of Fort has heard of anyone claiming to actually *feed* off electricity. *Odditycentral.lc9m, 9 Aug; D.Mail, 11 Aug 2017.*

EARLY TEETH

In August, doctors in the western Indian state of Gujarat successfully extracted seven teeth from a one-month old infant. Dental surgeon Dr Meet Ramatri said that the procedure was carried out in two stages: they first extracted four teeth, and then the remaining three. The teeth were discovered a few days after the boy's birth. "Sometimes you see tips (of the teeth) in newborns but they don't grow for a while," said Dr Ramatri. "In this case, the teeth were fully out." He was obliged to remove the teeth surgically, he added, because they were not firm, and if one of them had broken off, it could have got stuck in the baby's windpipe, which would have been fatal. He said that the baby was able to feed, but added that it was hard to say if the surgery would interfere with how the baby's teeth would grow in the future. *BBC News, 8 Sept 2017.*

Ella-Rose Lines was born with two perfectly formed incisors in her lower jaw. Her mother Samantha, from Rugby, Warwickshire, gave birth to Ella-Rose by cæsarean section last February. She had

started breastfeeding, but was apprehensive about being bitten. She was warned that the teeth could become a choking hazard, and to monitor them in case they became loose. *D.Mail, 22 Feb 2017.*

FOREIGN BODIES

After Paul Baxter, 50, a postman from Croston, Lancashire, had a cough for a year he was referred to a respiratory clinic. When scans revealed a dark mass in his chest, he feared he had a tumour. However, surgery revealed an orange police cone from a Playmobil traffic set he got for his seventh birthday. "I've been told I must have inhaled it for it to go into my windpipe," he said. "If I had swallowed it, it would have gone into my stomach and out the other end." The report on the case in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) said because Baxter was so young when he inhaled the toy, his airway had been able to remodel and adapt to the presence of a foreign body. It was not unusual for children to ingest or inhale small toys, it said, but "a case in which the onset of symptoms occurs so long after initial aspiration is unheard of". Baxter's cough subsided four months after the traffic cone was removed. *BBC News, D.Mail, 26 Sept; Sun, 28 Sept 2017.*

During a drinking game with friends in 1981, a 14-year-old youth named Wang, from Kunshan City in China's Jiangsu province, swallowed two ballpoint pens. After suffering stomach pains 36 years later, he went to hospital where the pens were discovered; he had forgotten all about them. Dr Xu Hongwei, who operated and removed them, said Wang was very lucky. "One punctured his intestine causing a festering wound," he said. Wang made a full recovery. The pens still worked. *Metro, 9 May 2017.*

When Steve Davies, 50, went to see a new dentist, he was found to have a lump in his mouth. Surgeons found a 5p-sized piece of lead lodged in his face. He recalled being cut on the cheek in 1981 after a pellet from an air-gun he was firing ricocheted. "A pellet hit something and whipped me across the cheek," said Mr Davis, 50, from Falkirk, Stirlingshire. "I was left with a lump which I thought was caused by the cut. It never hurt – it just felt like part of my mouth." *Sun, 6 May 2016.*

In 1965 Arthur Lampitt from Granite City, Illinois, smashed his 1963 Thunderbird into a truck. Fifty-one years later during surgery in St Louis, a 7in (18cm) indicator signal lever from that T-bird was removed from his left arm. The accident had broken Lampitt's hip, drawing attention away from the arm, which healed. Lampitt, now aged 75, was moving concrete blocks in late 2015 when his arm began to hurt for the first time and then to swell. Dr Timothy Lang removed the lever during a 45-minute operation. *Irish Examiner, 3 Jan 2016.*

Vietnamese doctors in Thai Nguyen Province removed a pair of scissors left lodged in a man's abdomen for 18 years. Ma Van Nhat, 54, visited hospital after being involved in a road accident last December, and an ultrasound test showed a sharp instrument lying to the left of his stomach, which turned out to be a 6in (15cm) pair of surgical scissors nestling next to his colon. It was thought they had been left inside him during a 1998 operation following an earlier road accident. He had noticed nothing since that time apart from some recent stomach pain, which did not respond to painkillers. The surgeons who carried out the three-hour procedure note the rusty handles of the scissors had become stuck to some nearby organs. *BBC News, 2 Jan 2017.*

INFECTIOUS SYMPTOMS

In an apparent case of mass psychogenic illness, 16 Thai schoolgirls experienced chest tightness, palpitations and fainting while being vaccinated against human papilloma virus (HPV) at Ban Krang School in Phitsanulok's Muang district. Nurse Jarunee Nasorn confirmed that 16 students had developed the symptoms – 11 of whom had yet to receive the vaccine. Jarunee said her team had earlier vaccinated other students without any side effects or problems. Most of the students recovered after receiving first aid, although three were taken to hospital. One of these was said to have suffered an asthma attack. *The Nation (Thailand), 9 Aug 2017.*

Exeter Hospital in New Hampshire was evacuated after operating room staff complained of nausea due to an "unknown odour". About 17 members of staff were affected, including some who experienced dizziness. The incident began at about 9am when four employees began complaining of headaches, dizziness and nausea. An estimated 12 staff were transported to other hospitals while others were treated and released. No patients experienced any symptoms. Fire and police officials were investigating. Tests for carbon monoxide were negative, and there were no liquid spills or gas in the operating room. *BBC News, 11 Aug 2017.*

ABOVE: Medical staff at Ban Krang School in Thailand, where 16 schoolgirls fainted while being vaccinated against human papilloma virus.

SIDELINES...

STILL HANGING ON

The oldest wallpaper discovered *in situ* in Britain comes from the Master's Lodge at Christ's College, Cambridge. Designed by Hugo Goes and featuring a pomegranate design created by a woodcut, it dates from about 1509. *Shropshire Star, 1 Mar 2017.*

BIG CAT LOOSE

A tiger spotted running across a highway in the US was shot dead by police. It was a mystery how the animal, which chased a dog, came to be on a road in Georgia. *Metro, 7 Sept 2017.*

BEWARE DENTURE GLUE

A man lost all feeling in his legs after being poisoned by zinc in his false teeth glue. The 62-year-old wore dentures for 15 years, using two to four tubes of adhesive a week. He was left with copper deficiency myelopathy – a spinal cord condition that cause numbness. He has yet to recover completely and may be left with irreversible nerve damage as he delayed getting help. *Sun, 8 Aug 2017.*

SAINT SHEELAH

In the old Irish calendar, 18 March, the day after St Patrick's Day, is Sheelah's Day; what is largely forgotten is that Sheelah (or Sheelagh) was once thought to be Patrick's wife. Before the Great Famine of the 1840s, the 17 March celebrations were extended for an additional 24 hours to commemorate her life. Her name is associated with Sheela-na-Gig, Mediæval carvings of women exposing their genitalia – folk deities of pregnancy and birth once widespread in Irish churches. *Irish Times (online), 17 Mar 2017.*

POT SHOTS

Former Lithuanian sniper Ruslanas Solovjovas, 39, used a high-powered air rifle to shoot shoppers as "target practice" on a Sunday morning last November. Police swooped on the former Wellington pub in Boston, Lincolnshire, after reports of shots being fired from a third-floor window. A young mother had a hole in her right leg and a man suffered bleeding from his back. Solovjovas got 14 months. *D.Telegraph, 7 Feb 2017.*

SIDELINES...

HIGH CHURCH

A derelict Lutheran building in Denver, Colorado, has reopened as the world's first International Church of Cannabis, adorned with psychedelic murals and dedicated to the worship of the spiritual benefits of the Weed – a new religion called Elevationism. *D.Telegraph, 27 July 2017*.

LIDL LOCUST

A 4in (10cm) -long locust was spotted on a pillar outside the Canterbury branch of Lidl last January. Nature expert Peter Gay thought that the species was probably *Schistocerca gregoria*, the biblical plague locust from North Africa, and that it had stowed away with fruit. *Kent Messenger Extra, 14 Jan 2017*.

EXHAUSTED TREES

According to German forester Peter Wohlleben, city trees are dying prematurely because they struggle to sleep amid the glare of streetlights; trees, like humans, need darkness in order to rest, but their circadian rhythms are disrupted by light pollution, stressing their systems. *D.Telegraph, 1 June 2017*.

PHANTOM DOOR KNOCKER

Villagers in Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire, set up security cameras after being tormented for 18 months by a phantom door knocker, but the culprit had not been spotted by the time of the report. "Sometimes it can be big, shuddering bangs, and it's really unnerving," said one resident. "It's ranged from 7pm to 11pm, 1am, even up to the early hours." *Sun, 5 Feb 2017.*

MARTIN ROSS

IG NOBELS 2017

Latest improbable research highlights liquid cats and gravity's effect on ears

The 27th annual Ig Nobel awards ceremony for research that "first makes you laugh, then makes you think" took place in Sanders Theatre at Harvard University on 14 September, with three bona fide Nobel laureates, including the British-born economist Oliver Hart, on hand to distribute prizes.

The physics prize went to Marc-Antoine Fardin for using fluid dynamics to probe the question "Can a cat be both a solid and a liquid?" Fardin's treatise, entitled *On the Rheology of Cats*, argues that cats can technically be regarded as simultaneously solid and liquid due to their uncanny ability to adapt to the shape of their container. Fardin was inspired by an Internet thread featuring absurd photos of cat-filled containers, ranging from sweet jars to sinks. "This raised some interesting questions about what it means to be a fluid and so I thought it could be used to highlight actually serious topics at the centre of the field of rheology, the study of flows," he said.

Fardin's treatise explores how to calculate a cat's "Deborah number", a special term used to describe fluidity, and speculated on how cats might behave if subjected to the "tilted jar experiment". He commented: "If you take a timelapse of a glacier on several years you will unmistakably see it flow down the mountain. For cats, the same principle holds. If you are observing a cat on a time larger than its relaxation time, it will be soft and adapt to its container, like a liquid would."

The peace prize went to a Swiss team for showing, in a randomised controlled trial, that didgeridoo playing reduces snoring and eases the symptoms of obstructive sleep apnœa. This could be due to the improving effect on tongue muscles and the reduction of "fat pads" in the throat. Since the publication of the report on the subject in the *British Medical Journal*, one of its authors has switched career to work full-time as a therapeutic didgeridoo instructor and has already taught around 2,500 patients.

ABOVE: One of the Internet's many solid/liquid cats. **BELOW**: The Babypod.

The economics prize was awarded to Matthew Rockoff and Nancy Greer, for their experiments to see how holding a small live crocodile affected a person's willingness to gamble. People who had negative feelings after holding the croc tended to bet less than non-croc-holding controls, while people who had no negative reaction from croc handling placed higher bets. James Heathcote, a GP from Kent, received the anatomy prize for solving the long-standing mystery of why old men have such big ears: evidently, they don't keep growing, but gravity stretches them by about 0.22mm per annum.

The biology prize went to an international team for their discovery of a female penis and a male vagina in a cave insect, while the prize for fluid dynamics was won by Jiwon Han, who, while still a high school student in South Korea, studied the dynamics of liquid-sloshing to learn what happens when someone walks backwards while carrying a cup of coffee. It turns out coffee tends to spill less when held by someone walking backwards, but this "drastically increases the chances of tripping on a stone or crashing into a passing-by colleague who may also be walking backwards (this would most definitely lead to spillage)."

The first scientific report of human blood in the diet of the hairy-legged vampire bat (*Diphylla ecaudata*) won the nutrition prize. A group of French neuroscientists was awarded the medicine prize for being the first to identify the brain circuits that underpin a hatred for cheese. The brain imaging study, in which people were asked to smell cheddar, goats' cheese and gruyère while lying in an MRI scanner, pinpointed a region called the basal ganglia as the neural epicentre of cheese disgust.

A study demonstrating that many identical twins cannot tell themselves apart visually won the cognition prize, while the obstetrics gong went to a couple of Spanish academics for showing that a developing human fœtus responds more strongly to music played electromechanically inside the mother's vagina than to music that is played electromechanically on the mother's belly. The finding has been turned into a device known as the 'Babypod' (Spanish patent ES2546919B1) for entertaining the unborn.

For last year's Ig Nobel winners, see **FT348:6-7.**

Maria's store helps her support her five children

Raised: **£265.00**
Needed: **£622.10**

Khoeurm's farm will provide jobs for her local community

Raised: **£640.00**
Needed: **£572.48**

WHOSE LIFE WILL YOU CHANGE WITH AN INVESTMENT OF JUST £15?

At CARE International, we know that sometimes, all people need is a little investment to change their lives forever.

That's why we've set up this revolutionary new way to help some of the world's poorest people. It's called Lendwithcare – and instead of giving a donation, you can lend from just £15 to fund a fledgling business.

Maria Martinez and Khoeurm Sat are just two of the people you could help to work their way out of poverty when you make a loan through lendwithcare.org.

How does it work?

1. You choose an entrepreneur at **www.lendwithcare.org**
2. You invest any amount from £15 in their business
3. The entrepreneur's business begins to grow
4. Your loan is repaid back to you
5. You re-invest in another entrepreneur, you withdraw your money or donate it to CARE International

VISIT LENDWITHCARE.ORG NOW TO MEET MORE ENTREPRENEURS AND DECIDE WHO YOU INVEST IN

lendwithcare.org
Microloans from CARE International UK

CARE International UK. Registered charity no 292506. CARE, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP
The loan status and amounts required were correct at the time of creating this advertisement.

care
Defending dignity. Fighting poverty.

The sound of violence

DAVID HAMBLING wonders what might be behind the sonic attacks on US diplomats in Cuba

The weird sonic assaults reported by US diplomatic staff based in Cuba [**FT359:22**] came as a surprise to the world media – but they bore many similarities with accounts by 'Targeted individuals' (TIs) since the early 2000s. TIs believe they are persecuted by unknown forces using weird, high-tech weapons to send remote beam sounds into their heads, causing pain and illness. They cluster in Internet support groups; the legal and medical establishments tend to regard them as having mental problems rather than suffering actual directed-energy-weapon assaults. When government officials are involved it is a different matter.

We do not know when the apparent attacks started; it appears to have been shortly after President Trump was elected in November 2016. Attacks continued sporadically until this August. The number of 'medically confirmed' American cases stands at 21, plus several Canadians targeted after February. The attacks resemble some reported by TIs: victims were in bed at homes or in hotel rooms, and heard a loud ringing or grinding sound, sometimes accompanied by vibration. The sound vanished as soon as they moved, as though it was focused on one specific spot. Victims then experienced severe headaches, nosebleeds, dizziness, nausea and hearing losses. Some have since been diagnosed with 'mild traumatic brain injury' with memory loss and mental impairment.

The US naturally assumed the Cuban government was responsible, and expelled two Cuban diplomats. The Cubans have accused the US of fabricating previous diplomatic incidents; this time they appear to be as puzzled as the Americans. Cuban President Raul Castro told acting US Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis that he was concerned by the attacks and made an unprecedented offer to allow the FBI to come to Havana to investigate.

Focused sound weapons do exist. The Long Range Acoustic Device has been used extensively by US military and law enforcement; it can act as a loudhailer, or at high settings it can be used for crowd dispersal. However, this type of device does not work through walls, and while it can project a beam of sound it would not be anything like as localised as the effects described by victims.

"Nothing about this story makes any sense to us," a spokesman from the makers, LRAD Corporation, told *WIRED*.

YAMIL LAGE / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: The US Embassy in Havana.

Some have suggested that chemicals are involved. Ototoxins are chemicals that damage the ear; some chemotherapy agents such as cisplatin cause hearing loss as a side effect. Such drugs damage the microscopic hair cells in the inner ear, and may result in hearing loss, tinnitus and loss of balance, just the sort of effects reported by the victims.

There is, however, an elephant in the room for anyone familiar with exotic nonlethal weaponry. The microwave auditory effect is a genuine phenomenon that allows sounds to be beamed literally into someone's head from a distance. Short, intense microwave pulses can heat tissue rapidly; if they are strong enough this sudden heating causes expansion and an acoustic shockwave inside the skull, which is perceived as a click. A series of pulses can be chained together to create a modulated sound, including (barely intelligible) speech.

This microwave auditory effect has never found practical application, though there have been plenty of ideas. Lev Sadovnik of the Sierra Nevada Corporation carried development for the US Navy of a device he called MEDUSA (Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio). MEDUSA was supposed to generate a microwave auditory effect powerful enough to cause severe discomfort. This used a special electronic antenna capable of forming a very narrow beam.

When I talked to Professor James Lin of the University of Illinois in Chicago about MEDUSA in 2008, he granted that it might be feasible in principle, but to be effective the shockwaves inside the skull could be dangerous. "I would worry about what other health effects it is having," he said. "You could see neural damage." Neural damage being one of the more puzzling effects of the Cuban attacks.

A microwave weapon might also cause inner ear effects. In the early 2000s, the US Marine Corps funded work on Electromagnetic Personnel Interdiction Control (EPIC), another nonlethal weapon. This used radio waves to affect the tiny hairs in the vestibular system that gives us our sense of balance. EPIC was being developed by Invocon Inc, a company specialising in wireless data transmission.

"You have to get the resonant frequency," Karl Kiefer, the company's CEO, told me. "The vestibular hairs are heavily damped, so you have to have a precise understanding of their properties."

EPIC was intended to cause dizziness and loss of balance, effectively preventing the targets from moving, and would work through walls. The aim was to disable a building full of terrorists so they could be captured without a fight. EPIC never progressed beyond the early states, but similar technology may have been developed elsewhere.

It is even possible that it was not a deliberate attack at all. There have been previous instances of wireless bugging devices that were powered by microwaves – one was famously concealed inside a wooden wall ornament in the US Embassy in Moscow. The injuries may have been caused accidentally by incompetent use of a high-powered microwave bug.

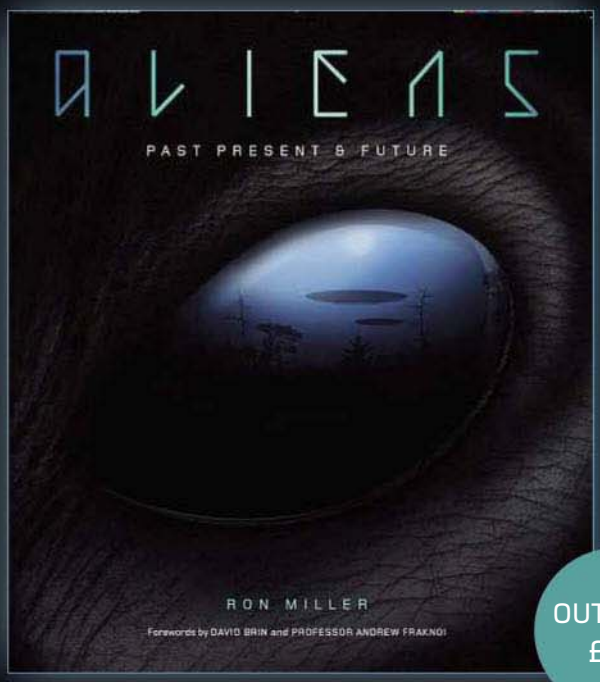
Perhaps a more important question is who is carrying out these attacks and what their motivation is. It is conceivable that there is a rogue element in the Cuban intelligence services trying to disrupt relations between the US and Cuba. However, the warming of relations under President Obama was quickly reversed by Trump, who has been decidedly hostile to the island neighbour. Further antagonism hardly seems necessary as relations are deteriorating anyway. And why target Canadians?

The answers, if any are forthcoming, will surely be more outlandish than any speculation. The case may also prompt a re-examination of some of the previous accounts by Targeted Individuals. Many of their claims, such as those involving mind control and telepathy, sound like schizophrenia, but some may be caused by the sort of devices used in Cuba.

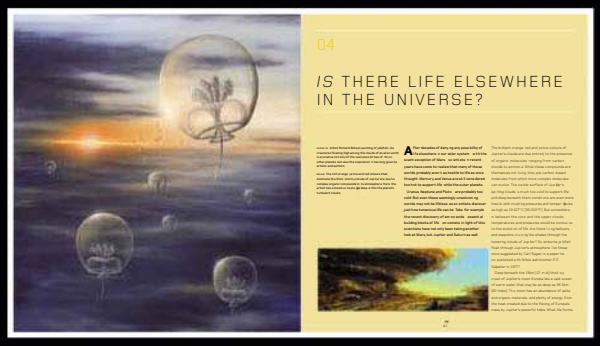
Such devices, which can apparently strike covertly and undetectably through walls, will almost certainly be used again.

ALIENS

The most comprehensive illustrated book on our fascination with life beyond Earth



OUT NOW
£25



- Written by world renowned author and artist **Ron Miller**
- Features contributions from *New York Times* bestselling author **David Brin** and xenolinguistics expert **Dr John Elliott**
- Contains more than 200 stunning illustrations and photographs
- Images range from ancient engravings and pop culture iconography to purported UFO sightings and illustrations depicting modern science's idea of extraterrestrial life

WATKINS

Our books celebrate conscious, passionate, wise and happy living. Be part of the community by visiting www.watkinspublishing.com

PAUL SIEVEKING uncovers a long-dead Russian beauty and rounds up some very ancient artefacts

POLAR PRINCESS

The mummy of a 'polar princess' has been found in Zeleny Yar near Salekhard in Russia, close to the Arctic Circle, an archæological complex first discovered in 1997. She was unwrapped from a cocoon of copper and fur in which she was buried in permafrost soil in the 12th century. Aged around 35, she was the only woman buried with about three-dozen men. This could mean she was an elite member of her society, although apart from several temple rings close to her skull, there was no evidence of jewellery in her tomb. Her impressive eyelashes and teeth are immaculately preserved, as is her full head of hair. The green tinge on her face is from the fragments of a copper kettle apparently intended to protect her as she journeyed to the afterlife. The pieces of kettle had the unintended consequence of mummifying her. While her head is well preserved, the rest of her body is not. She was a member of a mysterious mediæval hunting and fishing civilisation that held sway in this polar region, with connections to Persia revealed by DNA analysis. *Newsweek, 17 July; D.Mail, 5 Aug 2017.*

INSTITUTE OF THE PROBLEMS OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT SB RAS / THE SIBERIAN TIMES

UCL / PETRIE MUSEUM

OLDEST DRESS

The "Tarkhan Dress", in the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archæology in London, was once part of a pile of dirty linen cloth excavated by Sir Flinders Petrie in 1913 at the site he named Tarkhan after a nearby village 30 miles (48km) from Cairo. In 1977, researchers from the Victoria and Albert Museum, sorting through the pile of textiles as they prepared to clean them, discovered the dress, remarkably well preserved. They conserved the fabric, sewed it onto a type of extra-fine, transparent silk called Crepeline to stabilise it, and mounted it for display. The fine linen garment has now been carbon-dated to between 3482 and 3103 BC, not only making it the oldest woven garment in the world, but also pushing the date of linen back, perhaps to before Egypt's 1st Dynasty (ca. 3111–2906 BC). "With its pleated sleeves and bodice, together with the V-neck detail, it's a very fine piece of clothing," said Alice Stevenson, curator of the Petrie Museum. "There's nothing quite like it anywhere of that quality and date." *archaeology.org, 11 April, 12 Dec 2016.*

OLDEST GOLD

A gold bead 4mm in diameter, found at a prehistoric settlement in southern Bulgaria, is Europe's – and probably the world's – oldest gold artefact. It dates to 4500 BC, 200 years earlier than jewellery from a necropolis in the Bulgarian city of Varna, the oldest processed gold previously unearthed, in 1972. *[R] 11 Aug 2016.*

OLDEST SACRED SITE

Carbon dating of a wooden post, unearthed during a dig at the mediæval Church of the Holy Fathers in Sutton, Shrewsbury, showed that it was first placed in the ground in 2033 BC. The post is thought to have been part of a Neolithic cursus (an earthen avenue monument type whose purpose still baffles archæologists) and stone circle complex. Janey Green, of Baskerville Archæological Services, said: "We were blown away by the dates, having expected it to be Anglo-Saxon." This seemingly makes the place the oldest known sacred site in Britain that is still in use. Gods may change, but places remain. *D.Telegraph, 18 May 2017.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

218: FRENCH LETTERS AND MORE

"Please, Mr Postman, look and see / If there's a letter in your bag for me" – The Marvelettes

What with e-mail and 'social media' people apparently no longer writing letters, this column may be doubly ancient.

First up (so to speak): why do we call johnnies French Letters? One theory – bound to be others – is that Englishmen doing the European Grand Tour used to enclose a condom (regarded as a filthy French fetish) in their letters home.

This hardly tallies, though, with Francis Grose's statement in *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1796) that sheaths were invented by a Captain Cundum, with one Mrs Philips of Half-Moon-street in the Strand somehow acquiring a monopoly – expect James Boswell was her best customer.

The only mention of writing in Homer's *Iliad* (6. 168-9) describes "baleful signs, many deadly, scratched on a folded tablet" – essentially the first recorded case of 'Shoot the Messenger'.

As Antigone says in Sophocles's eponymous play (vv276-7), "Nobody loves the messenger who brings bad news". A message driven home by King Tigranes who (Plutarch, *Lucullus*, ch25; Appian, *Mithridatic Wars*, ch84) either beheaded or hanged the first reporter of the Roman advance.

Caligula (Suetonius, ch55 para1) may have been parodying this when he sent a troublesome knight to King Ptolemy with a letter that read: "Do nothing good or bad to bearer."

Despite Homer, Hellanicus (*Histories*, fr178) says Queen Atossa "was the first person to write a letter". She is further said only to have communicated with people via notes instead of in person. The reason for this (excluding her baggy pants and eunuch courtiers) was that she skulked in self-imposed quarantine, swaddled in sheets to conceal a suppurating breast lump until (Herodotus, bk3 ch130) cured by Greek doctor Democedes.

Elsewhere, Herodotus reports exiled Histiæus shaving a slave's head, tattooing a message on his scalp, waiting for hair to re-seed, sending him to recipient with orders to re-shave skull – quicker than Canada Post. Also, letters concealed in a hare's belly and one attached and despatched via long-range arrow – first recorded airmail delivery, emulated by Cæsar who (*Gallic Wars*, bk5 ch48) had a vital message hurled by a spear into his officer's camp.

Spartans may claim credit for inventing Tweeting. A desperate message (Xenophon, *Hellenika*, bk1 ch1 para23) read: "Ships destroyed, Mindarus dead, men starving, don't know what to do." When Lysander sent the triumphant message "Athens is taken" (Plutarch, ch14 para4), he received the rebuking "'Taken' Would Have Been Enough". Other laconic gems include Herodes Atticus's one-word (in Greek) urgent note to the mutinous general Avidius Cassius – "You're mad".

Rather different was the letter (Tacitus, *Annals*, bk4 chs39-40) sent by emperor Tiberius from Capri for the Senate's ears concerning Sejanus, his all-powerful Prætorian Prefect. Its cunning wording – worthy of Stalin – began by praising Sejanus before turning into a crescendo of abuse and accusations that brought his downfall and death. In Juvenal's re-telling (*Satires* 10. 56-72), the "long windy letter from Capri" resulted in Sejanus's statues being melted down into frying pans and chamber pots.

Epistolography was a distinct literary genre in Greece, Rome, and especially Byzantium. Cicero's dossier (edited and Penguinised by David Shackleton Bailey) contains around 800, including some replies from recipients: those from Cæsar would repay fresh inspection, since Suetonius (ch56 para6) says they used a letter-transposition code – job here for The Bletchley Circle. Cicero sometimes wrote three times a day to the same person – Thank God he didn't have e-mail.

At a humbler level, the many papyrus letters found in Egypt finely illustrate daily life, from boys writing in execrable Greek asking parents to "feed my pigeons" or moaning Daddy hadn't taken little Theon with him to Alexandria, to a father's PS to his pregnant wife: "If it's a boy, rear it; if a girl, expose it."

Aeschines (*Against Ctesiphon*, para52) ridicules Demosthenes for showing off letters exchanged between himself and Alexander the Great – prefiguring Facebook bragging. Unsure of his skill at penning amatory letters, Antony enlisted the epistolary skills of his officer Dellius and other friends to write courting notes to Cleopatra (Plutarch, ch25) – no help needed, though, for bedtime with Cleo.

There's also a long tradition of fake and famously anonymous letters. Pugnacious Yorkshire classicist Richard Bentley exposed (1699) the spurious Letters of Phalaris, Sicilian tyrant infamous for roasting people in a brazen bull (as pictured above) before himself meeting the same culinary end – would be ideal for Gordon Ramsay.

Until the Renaissance, the correspondence between that unpleasant pair Paul and Seneca was thought genuine. In modern times, the notorious 'Zinoviev Letter' stands out. Screeds published under noms de plume range from the Letters of 'Junius' (1769-72) to those of 'Mercurius Oxoniensis' published (1970) in the *Spectator*, now known to be a jape by Hugh Trevor Roper who would famously come to grief when taken in by the 'Hitler's Diaries' hoax.

Psychic pets and animal apparitions

ALAN MURDIE examines the intriguing relationship between animals and the supernatural

In 1971 an interesting experiment in practical ghost hunting was conducted at a haunted house in Kentucky. Instead of deploying cameras, tape-recorders and other gadgets, the parapsychologist Robert Morris (1942-2004) took in different animals – a dog, a cat, a white rat and a rattlesnake. Tests involved taking the animals into different rooms one at a time, including one room where there had been a murder. In that particular room alone the dog came in just two feet before snarling and backing out of the door and refusing to re-enter, despite cajoling by its owner. The cat was carried into the room and at the same point leapt up on to her owner and then jumped to the floor and orientated herself towards an empty chair. The cat "spent several minutes hissing and spitting at the empty chair" until taken out. There was no discernible reaction from the rat when released, but the rattlesnake immediately assumed an attack posture focusing on the same chair. None of the animals reacted in a similar way in any other room at the house or in a control room in which no tragedy had occurred. ('An experimental approach to the survival problem', 1971, by Robert Morris in *Theta* no.34:33.)

I do not think that this experiment has ever been replicated, but it was brought to mind by a recent feature in *BT Lifestyle* magazine (22 Sept 2017), headed "8 spooky signs your home might be haunted". Listed amongst "spooky signs" was "strange behaviour from pets in the property: e.g. dogs barking or growling at something you cannot see, cats staring in a particular area as if they can see someone". Perhaps sensing a popular trend, Yvette Fielding of *Most Haunted* announced earlier this year she was being accompanied on TV investigations by a two-year-old British Bulldog called Watson. It was swiftly reported "that the muscular canine has already shown his mettle by charging into the den of a suspected poltergeist while a security guard's dog refused to put one paw inside" (*D.Mirror*, 6 April 2017).

More seriously, replicating the Kentucky haunted house experiment at other premises would pose obvious challenges, not least in the UK where if you own or keep a rattlesnake or other front-fanged venomous snake you need a local authority licence, issued pursuant to the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976. Indeed, I doubt many households would welcome having a venomous snake let loose – far more dangerous than having a ghost around!

ABOVE: As well as always knowing when a vet visit is imminent, cats appear to react badly to ghosts.

> The cat spent several minutes hissing and spitting at the empty chair until taken out

More pertinently, as Morris acknowledged, paranormal experimentation with animals ('anpsi' research as it was dubbed) is fraught with methodological problems, since the behaviour of animals is potentially affected by many different variables and is always difficult to measure and interpret. Previously, in 1967, Morris had examined precognition in rats from studies of their behaviour, with results that seemed significant. However, different and conflicting results were obtained by later researchers with rodents (see 'Parapsychology, Biology and Anpsi' by Bob Morris in *Handbook of Parapsychology*, 1977, edited by Benjamin B Wolman) amid disapproval of animal experimentation in psi research altogether (See Mary Rose Barrington and Richard Greatrex, correspondence in *Journal of the SPR*, vol.46 1972, pp.309+475).

Bob Morris later went on to be the professor of the first school of parapsychology at a UK University. This was the Koestler Chair of Parapsychology at Edinburgh University, funded from the estate of Arthur Koestler (1905-1983), who had committed suicide along with his wife Cynthia in 1983, leaving a note expressing "some timid hopes for a depersonalised after-life". In his second autobiographical book *The Invisible Writing*, Koestler had written of a stay in the house by a lake in Switzerland in 1935. He recalled walking with his hostess Marai Kloepfer and her mongrel dog called Ricky. Suddenly the dog stopped "and gave out a growl which then turned into a plaintive long-drawn howl", its hair bristling. Maria hurried back to her house, stating afterwards that it was the ghost of a deceased schizophrenic uncle who had sexually assaulted her when she was three. He occasionally manifested in triplicate form, advancing upon her from three directions at once. Ricky the dog provided an early-warning system, reacting to warn her of the spectral approach.

Examples of animal reactions to hauntings and haunted houses are spread throughout ghost and psi literature. Accounts of animals of more than one species reacting in strange ways in the same property are rare, but not completely unknown. For example, both cats and dogs are claimed to respond to a phantom old woman at the Gatehouse, Whitchurch (see *A Journey With Ghosts*, 1999, by Nick Brazil).

Such accounts have a long history. Around 1903 a Mrs Emma Darton of York Mansions, Battersea, London, was alerted by the sudden growls of her dog Dan. Looking in the direction the dog was staring, she saw a figure in a grey gown by

the door of her sitting room. She stated: "In my surprise I took it to be my sister, and addressed it, asking how she had returned so quickly and quietly. Then, recollecting that I was alone in the house and the outer doors locked, I got up hastily and Dan sprang towards the figure, which disappeared, the door remaining shut. The dog showed every symptom of fear and anger—lowered head, glaring eyes, hair erect all down his spine. He was evidently convinced that someone was there, for on my opening the door of the room he tore out barking and rushed up and down stairs in a vain chase after the visitor, whom I need not say we failed to find. The house was empty…" ('Spirit hands, suggestion and dogs' by Andrew Lang, *Journal of the SPR*, vol.14, April 1909).

In 1955 Ken Yandell, a BBC producer who occupied a haunted apartment at 16 Montpelier Road in Ealing, told ghost hunter Andrew Green that his dog would go berserk every 28 days, eventually having to be put down. The flat was plagued by mysterious footsteps and sulphurous smells (*Our Haunted Kingdom*, 1973, by Andrew Green).

During 1968, Dick Nelms, the landlord of the King and Queen pub in Highworth, Wiltshire, was awoken by his two Alsatians mournfully howling. Going to the yard to investigate, he was confronted by a ghostly monk standing motionless and looking at him. Initially thinking it was an intruder, he let his dogs loose, but they just stood rooted to the spot. Undeterred, the landlord approached the figure himself, but it glided away through a wall. He stated: "I'm not the long-haired type who might be given to fancy. I have been in the trade for forty years and I know what I am talking about." (*Haunted! Britain's Spookiest Pubs*, 1998, by John Tomlin).

Altogether, such accounts rather confirm the idea in the folklore of many cultures of animals, especially dogs, cats and horses (with which humans have most interaction) reacting to the presence of ghosts and other supernatural entities such as banshees (See *The Banshee*, 1986, by Patricia Lysaght).

Such beliefs mirror ubiquitous beliefs concerning the wider psychic sensitivity of animals. The wife of Scottish poet and writer Hugh MacDiamid (1892-1978) observed how their pet dog seemed to be able to anticipate the homecoming of her husband before his arrival. MacDiarmid was a communist and Scottish nationalist, but one who often eschewed collective urban living and homeland, residing through the 1930s in a remote croft on Walsay (Shetland Islands) in between taking long trips abroad, as far away as China. His wife told writer Colin Wilson she always knew when he would be returning by the sudden excitement of their dog, which coincided with the point where MacDiarmid decided to head homewards (*The Occult*, 1971).

Such anecdotes have been given a measure of experimental support by the work of Rupert Sheldrake. He considers dogs that anticipate the return of their owners to be a widespread phenomenon, his most famous example being that of Jaytee, a dog owned by Pamela Smart. Her parents noticed that Jaytee seemed to anticipate her return, apparently waiting for her by the window, beginning around the time she was returning homewards. From May 1994, Pamela and her parents began to keep notes on her journeys and Jaytee's. Sheldrake undertook 96 sets of observations made between May 1994 and February 1995, relating to journeys on which she went up to 51km (32 miles) away from home, finding that Jaytee reacted 10 minutes or more in advance of Pamela's return on 82 occasions, whilst showing no anticipatory reactions on 14. This suggested a highly significant correlation between the times the dog reacted and the time Pamela set off for home, unaffected by distance. Jaytee also reacted on occasions when Pamela headed home at randomly selected times. In one of these experiments, both Jaytee's reactions and Pamela Smart's movements were recorded on videotape, and showed the dog reacted 11 seconds after Pamela was told to go home at a randomly selected time, previously unknown to her (see 'Psychic Pets: A survey in North West England' by Rupert Sheldrake and Pamela Smart, *Journal of the SPR*, vol.61 1996-97 p361; and *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home*, 1999, by Rupert Sheldrake).

In other research, Sheldrake has collected thousands of case histories of animals displaying seemingly paranormal abilities, many of them known or noted in fortean literature. These include animals diagnosing disease, identifying graves, responding to distant accidents, and sensing the future. These are consistent with numerous reports accumulated by the founder of modern parapsychology, JB Rhine (1895-1980) along with researcher SR Feather. Identifiable claims include (1) Behaviour suggestive of reacting to impending danger to the animal or its master (e.g. refusing to enter a vehicle that later crashed); (2) Behaviour suggesting a reaction to the death of its owner at a distance (the classic – not included in the Rhine collection – being the claim of the howling of the pet dog owned by George Herbert, the 5th Earl of Carnarvon, shortly after the opening the tomb of Tutankhamen); (3) Behaviour suggesting anticipation of the owner's return; (4) Homing behaviour; and (5) Psi-trailing where a lost animal finds the whereabouts of its owner. (See 'The study of psi-trailing in animals' in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, 1962, vol.26 pp.1-22.)

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

RUPERT SHELDRAKE

TOP: Rupert Sheldrake. **ABOVE**: His experiments with the dog Jaytee seemed to show a correlation between the dog's reactions and the times his owner was about to set off for home.

As Sheldrake points out, in order to carry weight within mainstream science, such categories need to be supplemented by careful experimental studies. Certainly, one of the easiest to verify, at least as a social phenomenon – and a good example of a mystery on-going in daily life – is the remarkable ability of cats to apprehend when a trip to the vet is imminent. Typically, the cat will absent itself before the intended visit, leading to numerous and missed late appointments.

I would venture this phenomenon can be confirmed by enquiring with any vet or at a veterinary surgery, and is cross-cultural. Try it yourself. In March 2011, on a visit to Cali, Colombia, I saw the lady of the house where I was staying prepare a special lead for restraining her pet cat. She told me it was necessary for tethering the family pet for a forthcoming trip to the vet the next day. She had noticed previously their cat would always try to run away. Early the next morning I saw their white cat apparently attempting to hide itself in the roof, or escape from the building, having climbed to the very top of the house. Unfortunately for its breakout attempt, like nearly all houses in the suburbs of Cali, this property was strongly secured against intruders and delinquents, making egress impossible. The cat was therefore duly captured and delivered to the vet. Out of interest, I accompanied the family when they later went to collect their pet and enquired if the vets experienced problems with cat owners keeping appointments. They assured me this was the bane of their professional lives. Back in Britain a month later, I had to visit a vet in Bury St Edmunds, West Suffolk, to pay a bill for my own dog Tammy, who had just died. I again ventured the same question about the issue of cats keeping to appointments, and obtained the English version of the same answer as in Colombia: "Always a problem".

Of course, how this ties up, if at all, with apparently shared experiences by humans and other animals jointly seeing apparitions we do not know. Possibly there is an overlap with telepathy and dream imagery, both of which have been linked with ghost experiences by some writers. The capacity of humans to dream is presumed to be one we share with other species from observations of animals during sleep. Charles Darwin wrote: "As dogs, cats, horses and probably all the higher animals, even birds, have vivid dreams, and this is shown by their movements and the sounds uttered, we must admit they have some power of imagination" (*The Descent of Man*, 1871). Rapid eye movements (REM) occurring in sleeping humans are often linked with dreams, and REM is observed with the

LEFT: TV presenter Alexander Armstrong was apparently haunted by the ghost of his dog.

eyes of many other mammals in sleep, from primates to dolphins. This is of great significance, for if animals dream, as the cultural critic George Steiner points out, "such dreams are generated and experienced outside any linguistic matrix. Their content, their sensory dynamics, are external to any linguistic code" (Steiner, 'The Historicity of Dreams (Two questions to Freud)', 1983, in *No Passion Spent – Essays 1978-1996*). Thus, whilst admitting we are not the only complex consciousness on the planet, Steiner considers animal dreams both impenetrable and beyond linguistic analysis, though raising interesting philosophical questions as to the nature of mind.

Yet the minds of animals may not be completely impenetrable to human experience. Consider the case of the violent and upsetting dream experienced by novelist Rider Haggard on the 9 July 1904, involving the death of Bob, a black retriever, his daughter's favourite dog. He dreamed seeing Bob lying in brushwood by water, gaining the impression that it was transmitting knowledge to him that Bob was dying. The next day Bob was missing. His collar was found near a bridge near Bungay, Suffolk, and four days later his body was eventually found in the River Waveney, apparently having been struck by a train at least three days earlier – according to a vet, Mr Mullane. This approximated the death to the time of Haggard's dream.

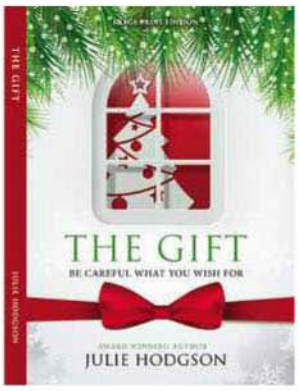
Reviewing Haggard's account, GNM Tyrrell, who advanced a telepathy-based theory for ghostly experiences in his book *Apparitions* (1942), stated: "If the case be considered as telepathic, it means that those mid-level elements of personality, which on the present view are responsible for telepathic contacts, exist in the case of dogs as well as in the case of human beings." Possibly. What we cannot know for certain was whether the images that Haggard experienced were those in the mind of the dying dog, or a dramatisation by his own unconscious stimulated by some kind of communication. But the possibility is there. Altogether this is a field that deserves closer phenomenological analysis into the structures of consciousness and experience – one any temporarily available graduates in relevant disciplines might care to explore!

Current news suggests many people believe themselves to have experienced a haunting from a ghostly pet dog or cat. The *Daily Mail* (16 Sept 2016) reported comedian and TV presenter Alexander Armstrong and his wife Hannah believing themselves "haunted by the ghost of their Norfolk terrier", a dog called Genghis. The couple told journalist Sebastian Shakespeare that for two weeks after the death of Genghis (killed by a car on the driveway of their home), the sounds of the dead dog running up and down their stairs was heard. "It was very weird," said Armstrong. "It definitely wasn't our other dog, Dotty, because she was asleep on the end of our bed. Then one day it just stopped. So I think that was his way of saying goodbye."

Armstrong, who recently presented ITV's *Teach My Pet To Do That*, celebrating the "hidden intellectual potential" of the nation's pets, is not alone. Previously in 2016, Bel Mooney, a columnist for the same paper, reported feeling the return of her pet dog Bonnie. Many readers wrote in with similar experiences (*Daily Mail* online, 26 Aug 2016). In July 2017 it was revealed some 23 per cent of pet-owners believe they will be visited by a dead pet with 17 per cent declaring they already have been visited by an a deceased animal. (www.animalfriends.co.uk/blog/how-do-brits-cope-with-the-loss-of-a-pet/ 3 July; *Evening Express* (Aberdeen) 24 July 2017).

But a sighting of a ghostly animal in a domestic setting may not always be a pleasant or desirable thing, at least in older cases. Psychical researcher and folklorist Andrew Lang saw a hideous cat as his death omen (*Andrew Lang: a Critical Biography*, 1946, by RL Green) and there are several stories of white dogs associated with cot deaths of babies (see for example a case in Birmingham in 1955, in *Ghosts Over Britain*, 1976, by Peter Moss; article 'Would you have the guts to live in this house?', *The People,* 17 July 1955). However much psychic pet stories may be lampooned, mocked or trivialised as 'anecdotes', there are some deeply serious and significant issues here.

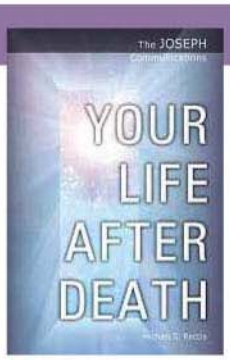
ITV



Joe is Christmas's number one fan. He absolutely loves it and can't wait to spend it with his wife, Beth, doing what they love best: eating mince pies, drinking mulled wine, laughing and snuggling while It's a Wonderful Life plays on the TV. However, Beth has a slightly different idea this year. She wants to have a terrible time, or why else would she have invited her mother to stay – the demon mother-in-law from hell, who hates Christmas and everything about it? In fact, there is only one thing that the dreaded MIL hates more than Christmas ... and that is Joe.

Thankfully, Joe has an ally in his war against the orange-haired, gum-chewing monster: a shopping centre Santa who isn't all that he seems. This larger-than-life Father Christmas presents Joe with a magical gift that he promises will make the problem disappear, but this innocent-looking parcel kick-starts an adventure that Joe will never forget. If he can make it to Christmas day in one piece and save his wife and unborn child from a lifetime in Lapland, he will have learned one crucial lesson: to be careful what you wish for ... you might just get it.

Available on Amazon and to order at all good book stores.
Signed copies on request from www.juliehodgson.com
Large print edition available



The JOSEPH Communications

If you only read one spiritual book in your lifetime, make it this one.

OBLIVION OR OPPORTUNITIES AND WONDERS – just what, precisely, awaits beyond physical death?

Authored by 'Joseph' from an advanced reality 'beyond the veil', this internationally acclaimed book delivers arguably the most comprehensive, no-nonsense account ever written of what lies ahead upon leaving this world behind.

Revealing, inspiring, comforting ...*Your Life After Death* dares to draw back the final curtain and demystify the mystery. Read it and you'll never look at the next life, or, indeed, this one, in quite the same way again.

'Thanks to Joseph I am having a fabulous old age – hope is one thing, knowledge another.'
Pauline Hutchins.

'Over the years I have read many books on this subject but none have been more informative and in-depth.'
Peggy Sivyer.

AVAILABLE FROM: www.josephspeaks.com or amazon.co.uk
or send cheque for £16.95 (includes p&p) made payable to
Band of Light Media Ltd.
to: 10 Sparrable Row, Briercliffe, Burnley, Lancashire, BB10 3QW.

eBook versions available from:
amazon.com BARNES&NOBLE

RAISE R'LYEH

BECOME A

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/RAISERLYEH
KICKSTARTER - RAISE R'LYEH

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Bin Ladens down the lav, a wad in the forest, and the return of the million quid-burning KLF

FLUSH WITH CASH

Swiss prosecutors are investigating why about 100,000 euros were flushed down lavatories in Geneva last June. The €500 (£440) notes were cut up and found in the lavatories of a branch of the bank UBS and in three nearby restaurants. Investigators suspected the money might have belonged "to Spanish women who placed it in a safe-deposit box several years ago." A lawyer acting for the two women provided little information, but handed over money to pay for repairs to the lavatories of the bank and restaurants, who had to spend thousands of euros getting them unclogged. The high-value euro note – referred to in some criminal circles as a "bin Laden" – is due to be withdrawn in 2018 over fears it facilitates money laundering. It will remain legal tender, but the European Central Bank will stop producing it. Destroying notes is not an offence in Switzerland, but local prosecutors confirmed they were looking into the circumstances around the unusual find. "There must be something behind this story," said a spokesman for the Geneva prosecutor's office. The manager of the Café du Centre said: "Tax evasion is the most likely theory. They should have given the money to beggars." However, burning money effectively gives the issuing authority a windfall, doesn't it? *BBC News, 18 Sept; D.Telegraph, 19 Sept; NY Times, 21 Sept 2017.*

RICHARD MARTIN-ROBERTS / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: The KLF's Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond arrive in Liverpool in an ice cream van to launch their new book.

TAKING NOTES

Drivers dumped their cars to grab handfuls of cash after thousands of £20 and £10 notes blew along a busy road near Epping Forest in Essex. One motorcyclist was seen shoving wads of notes into a backpack. The road is near a Bank of England printer in Loughton, but the business insisted it was not missing any cash. *Sun, 3 July 2017.*

MONEY TO BURN

On 23 August 1994, The KLF – one of Britain's most incendiary bands, "art terrorists" to some – burned £1m on a remote Scottish island. They then vowed to put their careers on hold for 23 years; so at 23 seconds past midnight on 23 August 2017 they made their comeback at a book launch in Liverpool. The duo were greeted by 500 fans as they arrived at the News From Nowhere bookshop in an ice cream van that played their hit 'What Time Is Love?' and 'O Sole Mio'. That marked the start of a three-day festival of talks, performance and live art, including a debate on the topic "Why Did the K Foundation Burn a Million Quid?"

The KLF's Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond didn't perform any music, but their new novel *2023*, described as "a utopian costume drama set in the near future written in the recent past" and "a multi-layered, self-referential meta tale", was performed in full. The KLF – also known as The Justified Ancients of Mu Mu, The JAMs, and The Timelords – had hits like 3AM Eternal, Last Train to Trancentral and What Time Is Love? in the late 1980s and early 1990s. KLF was the biggest-selling singles act in the world in 1991. At the 1992 BRIT Awards, Drummond fired machine gun blanks over the heads of the audience and the band's promoter announced over the PA system that "The KLF have now left the music business". Later that evening, the band dumped a dead sheep with the message "I died for you – bon appétit" tied around its body at the entrance to one of the post-ceremony parties. In 1993, with the profits from KLF, Cauty and Drummond established the K Foundation and sought to subvert the art world, staging an alternative art award for the worst artist of the year, and in 1994 taking the £1m they had left in royalties to the island of Jura and burning bundles of £50 notes. *BBC News, 23 Aug 2017.*

Curious fact: back in 1976, Bill Drummond (then an art student) had designed the sets for *Illuminatus!* at the Liverpool Everyman, Ken Campbell's production for the Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool, based on the famous *Illuminatus!* trilogy by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson (1969-71), celebrating (and spoofing) grand conspiracy theories. In 1977, Wilson wrote "The 23 Phenomenon" for *Fortean Times*, about the significance of that fateful number and its association with forteana and death, first noted by William Burroughs [**FT23:32-35**].

MIGUEL MEDINA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

KARL SHUKER looks to the treetops to find a new rat and investigates a toothy mystery

VELIZAR SIMEONOVSKI / FIELD MUSEUM

ABOVE LEFT: An artist's impression of the huge, coconut-eating Vanguru giant rat.

A RAT FROM THE SKY!

In November 2015, some loggers were at work on the island of Vangunu in the Solomons group when they brought down more than just some trees. Also crashing groundward, as if jettisoned down from the very sky itself, was a huge rat that had been concealed from view high above in the tree canopy. Until now, scientists had discounted traditional local lore that such mega-rodents existed on Vangunu, because they had never seen or captured any. Yet the locals had no doubt of their reality – indeed, this elusive giant rat form even has its own native name here, the vika, and features in their children's nursery rhymes.

And now, thanks to the loggers, science finally had a specimen to examine. Tragically, it had not survived its precipitous descent, but its body was swiftly collected by Hikuna Judge, a ranger from a conservation area close by, who recognised its distinctiveness and sent it promptly to Queensland Museum, where it was studied by mammalogist Dr Tyrone Lavery. He had originally heard tell of Vangunu's giant mystery rat when he had first visited this island in 2010, and had been investigating reports of it ever since. Now that he finally had a specimen, he conducted an extensive DNA and anatomical examination, which revealed it to be a new species of mosaic-tailed rat.

So in September 2017, via a *Journal of Mammalogy* paper, Lavery and Judge officially described it, and named it *Uromys vika*, the Vanguru giant rat or vika. Its finding is a textbook example of a cryptozoological success story – discovering a species familiar to the locals but hitherto unknown to science, after taking heed of native testimony and actively pursuing it. Weighing over 2lb (0.9kg) and measuring up to 18in (46cm) long, the vika is roughly four times as large as familiar city rats, sports an attractive golden pelage and a long hairless tail, and is said to have so strong a bite that it can break open coconuts. Sadly, however, it is gravely threatened with extinction due to the very logging procedures on Vanguru that belatedly brought it to scientific attention, as it occurs only in the treetops.

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/09/new-giant-rat-species-solomon-islands-vangunu/ (27 Sept 2017).
www.scientificamerican.com/article/giant-tree-dwelling-coconut-eating-rat-species-discovered/ (27 Sept 2017).

FANGED BUT FACELESS IN TEXAS

One of the most unexpected outcomes of Hurricane Harvey's devastation during early autumn 2017 off the southern USA was the discovery of a very bizarre sea creature washed up dead on a beach in Texas City, approximately 15 miles (24km) from Galveston in southeastern Texas. Photographs of the carcass, snapped by Preeti Desai, social media manager at the National Audubon Society, who had originally spotted it when accompanying some conservationists inspecting the damage caused by Harvey, soon began to circulate online, especially in social media, prompting all manner of speculation as to what they may depict. This was due in no small way to the creature sporting some formidable fangs but otherwise seemingly lacking any recognisable face, and the photos ostensibly lacking any feature by which the creature's actual size could be ascertained.

Eventually, Desai contacted Dr Kenneth Tighe, an eel expert at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC, who considered it most likely that the creature was a fangtooth snake-eel *Aplatophis chauliodus*. Usually up to around 3ft (90cm) long (a drinking straw spotted by Desai near the mystery fish's tail in the photos confirmed that this was indeed the latter creature's size), these eels normally spend their lives in burrows 100-300ft (30-90m) down in waters stretching from the Gulf of Mexico down to French Guiana in northeastern South America, with only their eyes and snout exposed, poised ready to lunge forth and seize with their sizeable fangs any unsuspecting fishes or crustaceans swimming close by. Because the tip of the creature's tail was not visible in the photographs, Tighe could not entirely rule out two other possible identities – the large-toothed conger eel *Bathyuroconger vicinus* or the bristletooth conger eel *Xenomystax congroides*, both of which inhabit the same waters off Texas as the fangtooth snake-eel, and can only be unequivocally distinguished from it by virtue of the precise shape of their tail tip – but overall the snake-eel identity seemed to Tighe to be the most probable. Sadly, however, because the specimen was not collected, its precise identity can never be conclusively determined.

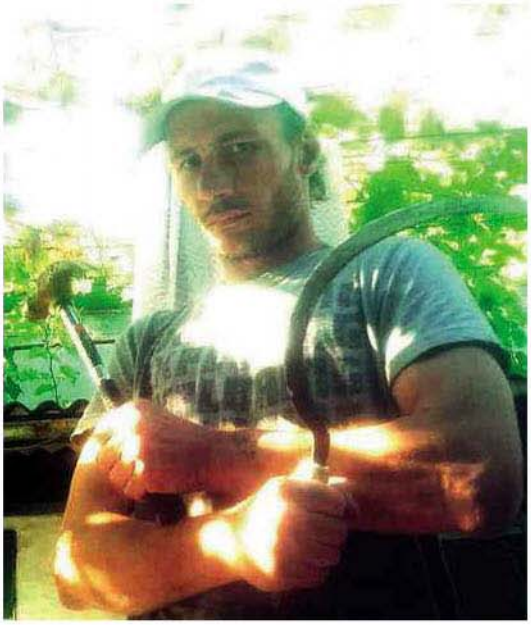
www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/09/14/the-fanged-faceless-sea-creature-that-washed-ashore-during-harvey-has-been-identified/?utm_term=.e0e49a949ced 7 Sept 2017.

PREETI DESAI / TWITTER

ABOVE: The mystery carcass washed up on a Texas City beach in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

THE PEOPLE-EATERS

Russia's cannibal killers, an unusual family meal in Ukraine, and African healer tires of eating human flesh...



MASH / EAST2WEST NEWS

ABOVE: Dmitry Baksheyev and his wife Natalya confessed to killing and eating up to 30 people over an 18-year period.

RUSSIAN CANNIBALS

A couple arrested for murder in the south-west Russian city of Krasnodar have admitted killing and eating up to 30 people over an 18-year period. Dmitry Baksheyev, 35, and his wife Natalya, 42, were arrested after the dismembered body of a 35-year-old woman was found in bags in a basement at the military base where they lived. The head was in a bucket of water. The couple reportedly manufactured canned human meat for their own stockpile and to feed to the servicemen in the military school, where Natalya worked as a nurse. Natalya also worked as a chef to boost her income and sold pies made of human meat to cafés and restaurants. Seven packs of frozen body parts were found in the couple's fridge and freezer as well as in a cellar, while some meat was discovered preserved in jars filled with saline solution. Some 19 remains of human skin were also discovered. The couple still lived in the dormitory at the military base where Mr Baksheyev once worked. Photographs found printed and on mobile phones included one dated 28 December 1999 that appears to show a dismembered human head on a serving plate surrounded by oranges. Recipes and video lessons for cooking human meat were also found. At the time of the reports, police had identified seven victims.

The horror story began to unfold when construction worker Roman Khomyakov visited the local police station on 11 September, greatly disturbed by the images on a phone he'd found on the street. On the black Samsung's cracked screen, he swiped through a series of gruesome pictures showing a man posing for selfies with what

In one selfie he had the fingers of a severed hand in his mouth

appeared to be the head and wrists of a woman; in one he had the fingers of a severed hand in his mouth and nose. The man in the photographs had approached Khomyakov on the street to ask if he'd picked up a phone in the area, which Khomyakov denied.

The remains of the woman were found the following day, and police identified Baksheyev from the phone's sim card. *Metro.co.uk, rt.com, [CNN], 25 Sept; BBC News, 26 Sept; D.Mirror, 26+28 Sept;*

FAMILY MEAL

A 29-year-old man in Ukraine shot his aunt (51), uncle (68) and a cousin before he sliced them up and boiled their body parts in several saucepans, then sealed some of the meat in cans, presumably for eating. Police investigated after neighbours complained about a bad smell coming from the flat in Kiev. As they smashed down the front door, they heard a gunshot and rushed in to find the unnamed suspect had shot himself in the head. He died on the way to hospital. *D.Mirror online, 14 Dec 2016.*

MAGICAL MEAT

On 18 August, a man claiming to be a traditional healer walked into Estcourt police station in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa, and said he was "tired of eating human flesh". Police officers initially dismissed his statement, but he was immediately arrested when he produced part of a bloodied human leg and hand. The man – nicknamed Mkhonyovu, meaning "the corrupt one" in the local Zulu language – led the police to his rented hut in nearby Rensburgdrift, where they found

GALLO IMAGES / DAILY SUN / JABULANI LANGA / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Protesters at the Estcourt Magistrates Court, where the flesh-eating suspects appeared, say no to cannibalism.

ABOVE: Aphiwe Mapekula, accused of beheading a woman and eating her corpse, was shot by police and died in hospital.

eight human ears in a cooking pot. It is believed they were to be served to his customers, who were told they had magic properties and would convey money, power and protection. Several other body parts were found stuffed in a suitcase. Five men, all in their thirties, were charged with murder and possession of body parts. One of their alleged victims was Zanele Hlatshwayo, 25, whose decapitated body was found in the nearby village of Shayamoya. She had been missing since July, and her bloodied and torn clothes were found among the human remains in the traditional healer's hut. It is alleged that Mkhonyovu sent the young men to dig graves in the middle of the night so he could make *muti* (magic charms). Mthembeni Majola, a local politician, alleged that some of Mkhonyovu's customers were livestock thieves who were told he could make them invincible, even bulletproof, so that the police could not shoot them. *BBC News, 28 Aug; D.Telegraph, 29 Aug 2017.*

CANNIBAL SHOT

A man accused of beheading a woman and eating her corpse died in hospital after being shot by police. Aphiwe Mapekula, 23, was shot in the arm, leg and stomach outside his home in Mount Frere, South Africa, after officers arrived to find him eating the flesh of Thembisa Masumpa, 35, a woman who was known to him and whom he allegedly beheaded after a family argument. Mapekula ignored several warning shots, before charging at the police with a knife when they opened fire. He was taken to hospital, where he is alleged to have attacked a female medic minutes after being admitted, and died three days later on 12 September. Local mayor Bulelwa Mabengu said he believed "drug and substance abuse" was involved. *independent.co.uk, 18 Sept 2017.*

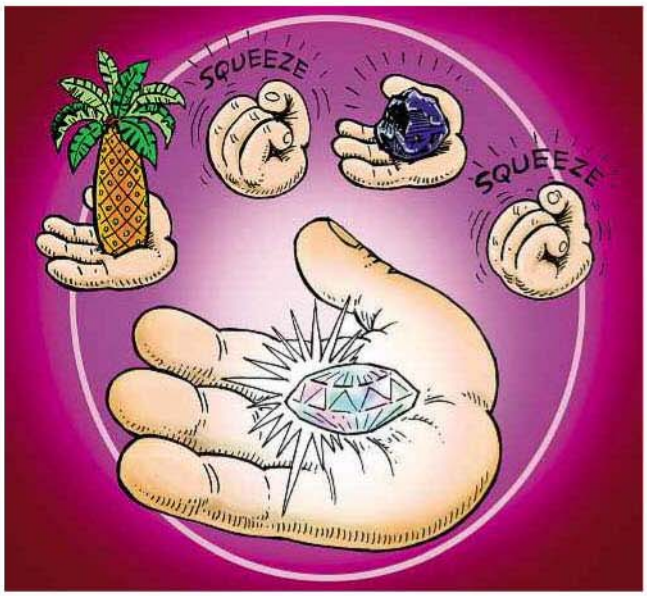
A QUICK BITE

Megan McQuaide, 18, was arrested after she was involved in a traffic accident in Barnesmore, Co Donegal, Ireland, on 24 June. McQuaide, a resident of Derry, was a passenger in a car but was unhurt. Gardaí found her standing in the middle of the road shouting and striking out at the emergency services. She was taken to hospital where she assaulted members of staff. She was arrested for public order offences and taken to Letterkenny Garda station. As she was being released into the care of her grandmother, she sank her teeth into the chest of a female Garda, shouting, "If you can't beat them, eat them." She bit through two layers of clothing and broke the skin of the Garda, causing her severe bruising. *irishtimes.com, 18 Sept 2017.*

MYTHCONCEPTIONS

by Mat Coward

218: DIAMONDS



The myth

Diamonds are made of coal. Or at least, *were* made of coal, millions of years ago.

The "truth"

Well, that's what I always understood: that coal was, in some unimaginable way, squeezed by immense tectonic pressure, until it went all sparkly. But it turns out that, although diamonds and coal are formed in similar ways – by sources of carbon being exposed to pressure – one is not formed from the other. For one thing, coal consists of dead plants – and all natural diamonds on the planet were created long before the first plants evolved. Coal is an infant, born no more than 3 or 4 million years ago, whereas the venerable diamond is about a billion years old. The two substances also form at different levels of the underground, with coal rarely found deeper than a couple of miles down, while diamonds require the kind of heat and pressure which is only available at depths of about 100 miles. Finally, diamonds are pretty much pure carbon, while coal is made up of carbon with bits in it – and those impurities make it impossible for the latter to be transformed into the former.

Sources

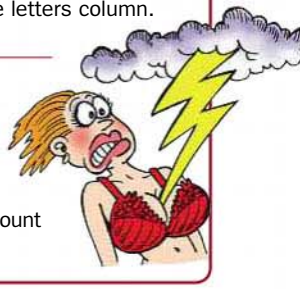
www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/stories/do-diamonds-really-come-from-coal; www.thenakedscientists.com/articles/interviews/myth-can-diamonds-be-made-coal; http://geology.com/articles/diamonds-from-coal/

Disclaimer

Nobody is quite certain how diamonds come about, only how they don't, so if you wish to dispute, correct or elaborate on any of this column's gems please engage with us via the letters column.

Mythchaser

It seems to be an established fact that wearing an underwired bra increases one's risk of being struck by lightning. But a reader wonders whether this can possibly be true – would such a small amount of metal make so much difference?



NECROLOG

This month, we bid farewell to a Catholic scholar of Mariology and mysticism and the Russian military officer who saved the world from nuclear disaster

GIANANGELO PISTOIA

RENÉ LAURENTIN

Laurentin was arguably Catholicism's pre-eminent scholar of contemporary miracles and Marian apparitions. He was ordained in 1946, and studied Thomist philosophy at the Catholic University of Paris and philosophy at the Sorbonne. He later served as a professor of theology at the Catholic University of Paris and the Catholic University of the West in Angers, France. A student of Jacques Maritain and Henri Bergson, he combined a sense of academic rigour with a religious faith shaped by World War II, when he was captured by the Nazis in Belgium and imprisoned for five years. He specialised in Mariology, the study of the Virgin Mary, but his columns for *Le Figaro* and his more than 150 books often ranged far afield. He investigated the story of Richard Thomas, a priest in Texas who supposedly multiplied tins of condensed milk to feed the masses; and he studied the claims of Greek Orthodox evangelist Vassula Ryden, whom he called "the most authentic mystic living in the world today."

Laurentin was best known for his studies of Lourdes, where Mary had appeared 18 times to 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous in 1858. He spent more than a decade combing the archives for documents surrounding Soubirous, who said she had been instructed by Mary to build a chapel at a cave near the town, and presenting the story of the apparitions in a way that balanced scholarship with literary style. His first book on the subject, *The Meaning of Lourdes* (1955), was followed by a seven-volume compendium of documents about the Lourdes sightings, as well as a six-volume *Authentic History of the Apparitions*.

Laurentin also served as a consultant to the preparatory commission for the Second Vatican Council, which began in 1962, and participated as a scholar, taking notes on the proceedings at a time when the church was facing questions over Mary's role in the faith. Outside of the Trinity, Mary has become one of Catholicism's most important Biblical figures. Though fully human, she is believed to be without sin. She became a particularly popular figure during the papacy of John Paul II, whose Latin motto – *totus tuus* (totally yours) – referred to Mary, and who was nearly killed in 1981 during an assassination attempt that he said was thwarted by a Marian intervention. Yet Laurentin, whose expertise was increasingly put to use as reports of apparitions increased in the 1980s and 1990s, resisted placing undue emphasis on Mary. "Mary is the model of our faith, but she is not divine," he said in 2000. "There is no mediation or co-redemption except in Christ. He alone is God." In all, Mary has reportedly appeared more than 2,400 times since the Middle Ages, once to a man in Marlboro, New Jersey, who said he saw the BVM while seated on a plastic bucket in his back yard.

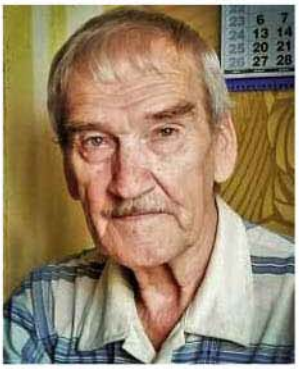
Laurentin's 1995 book *An Appeal from Mary in Argentina* gives an account of BVM apparitions witnessed over a number of years by mother-of-two Gladys Quiroga de Motta, a middle-aged housewife in San Nicolás de los Arroyos. The apparitions began on 25 September 1983 with phenomena of luminous glowing rosaries. She claimed that Jesus himself had brought her 68 prophetic visions. These were declared "worthy of belief" by the local Bishop Cardelli in May 2016.

The church, Laurentin wrote in one essay, used four criteria to grant recognition to a supernatural occurrence: whether the message of the apparition is in accordance with Christian teachings; the seer is "sincere, credible, coherent and disinterested"; acts of healing or physical signs of a supernatural presence occur; and long-term religious conversions follow from the incident. Even when an occurrence has been recognised, he noted, individual Catholics were not obliged to believe. Belief as a whole, he said, was entirely out of his purview – though he seemed more sympathetic than many Catholic priests and scholars in his opinion of Medjugorje, Bosnia Herzegovina, where Mary has allegedly appeared regularly since June 1981. "If someone asks me if I believe in Medjugorje, I say, 'I am not obliged to answer this question.' I am an expert; I examine reasons in favour and reasons against," he told a priest in 2003. "Let each one judge for himself and let [the] Church judge for all of us."

René Laurentin, French theologian, born Tours, France, 19 Oct 1917; died Evry, Paris 10 Sept 2017, aged 99.

STANISLAV PETROV

Stanislav Petrov almost certainly saved the world from nuclear disaster. He was on duty at a Russian nuclear early warning centre on the morning of 26 September 1983 when he received computer readouts suggesting several US missiles had been launched. "The siren howled, but I just sat there for a few seconds, staring at the big, back-lit, red screen with the word 'launch' on it," he said. "A minute later the siren went off again. The second missile was launched. Then the third, and the fourth, and the fifth. Computers changed their alerts from 'launch' to 'missile strike'. There was no rule about how long we were allowed to think before we reported a strike, but we knew that every

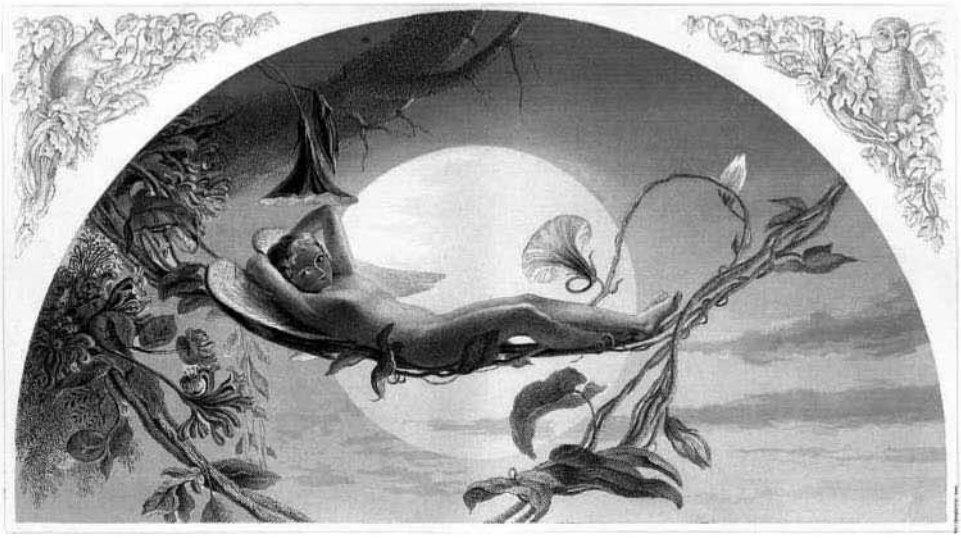


second of procrastination took away valuable time; that the Soviet Union's military and political leadership needed to be informed without delay. I had all the data [to suggest there was an ongoing missile attack]. If I had sent my report up the chain of command, nobody would have said a word against it. All I had to do was to reach for the phone; to raise the direct line to our top commanders – but I couldn't move. I felt like I was sitting on a hot frying pan."

Although his training dictated he should contact the Soviet military immediately, Petrov instead called the duty officer at army headquarters and reported a system malfunction. If he had been wrong, the first nuclear blasts would have happened soon after. "Twenty-three minutes later I realised that nothing had happened. If there had been a real strike, then I would already know about it. It was such a relief." A later investigation concluded that Soviet satellites had mistakenly identified sunlight reflecting on clouds as the engines of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Petrov said he was the only officer in his team who had received a civilian education. "My colleagues were all professional soldiers, they were taught to give and obey orders," he said. So, he believed, if somebody else had been on shift, the alarm would have been raised.

Petrov retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel. German film-maker Karl Schumacher, who first brought Petrov's story to an international audience, telephoned him to wish him a happy birthday on 7 September only to be informed by his son that he had passed away the previous May. Schumacher announced the death online and it was eventually picked up by media outlets.

Stanislav Petrov, Soviet military officer, born 1940; died Moscow 19 May 2017, aged 77.



Fairies, Folklore and Forteana

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

HUNTING FOR HERNE

In 1597 Shakespeare wrote a few lines about the ghost of a Windsor forester named Herne in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. This Herne, variously described by the Bard as a 'woodman', a 'keeper' and, crucially, a 'hunter', apparently haunted an oak in Windsor Park. In some respects, Herne was a normal Elizabethan ghoul. He rattled chains and came out at midnight. But he also had some more unusual features – country ghosts often have baroque touches in English folklore. Herne only appeared in winter. He 'blasted' trees. He ruined the milk of local cows. Oh, and Herne wore a ragged set of deer horns: though folklorist Jeremy Harte has suggested that this was Shakespeare's own addition. Herne disappeared after his brief Shakespearean sally. Even in the 19th century, antiquarians were more worried about finding Herne's Oak (there were several candidates) than gathering traditions about Herne himself: perhaps there were no Herne stories left? Herne flourished, instead, in fiction.

To name the highlights, he is the only worthwhile character in Ainsworth's interminable novel *Windsor Castle* in 1842; he then appeared in the *Box of Delights* in 1935, in Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* in 1973 and in ITV's *Robin of Sherwood* in the mid-1980s (cue clanging music and 'the Hooded Man'). These were not just appearances, though: they were a series of promotions. Herne was no longer a Windsor soul in anguish: there are clues that he had originally been the ghost of a suicide. He had become the Green Man, the genius of the English countryside. Interestingly, as the fictional Herne took shape and grew from Elizabethan bogey to Anglo-Celtic god, so the paranormal Herne made a comeback. He began, starting in the early 1900s, to be seen and heard in the woods and ways once more. We have here the hundredth hint from folklore that the supernatural and fantasy feed off each other in little understood ways.

> THERE IS NOW THE TRADITON THAT HERNE BLOWS HIS HORN AT TIMES OF BRITISH-WIDE DISASTER

Is the new Herne nothing more than a national *tulpa*, an entity created by the imagination of millions? It is striking that the contemporary Herne resembles not the Herne of Shakespeare, but the Herne of children's literature and dreamy Sherwood. He is no longer manacled to a tree in Berkshire. He rides out at the head of the wild hunt and has been, in a very real sense, nationalised. There is now the tradition that Herne blows his horn – Herne's horn does not appear, save possibly in some stage instructions, in *The Merry Wives* – at times of British-wide disaster. This tradition, note, does not seem to have existed before the early 1970s. There are, however, copious *later* references to Herne helpfully blasting away before the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com

Rockets, reptiles, and a resurrection

PETER BROOKESMITH surveys the latest fads and flaps from the world of ufological research

FROM TINY ACORNS...

Not so much an old chestnut this time, as an old acorn – the 'UFO' that allegedly crashed in the woods at Kecksburg, Pennsylvania, on 9 December 1965 (see **FT171:18**, **179:22**, **206:27**). The 'incident' is rooted in a huge meteorite known as the Great Lakes Fireball that was visible that afternoon across some six states plus Ontario. Ufologists took no notice until the late 1970s, when Leonard Stringfield retailed Clark McClelland's rather more elaborate version of events in the second of his *UFO Crash Retrival Syndrome* status reports. McClelland suggested that it was a Russian satellite that had crashed in the woods, was recovered by police, firemen, and "a large contingent of military specialists" (actually there were fully three of them), and was hidden under a tarp before being hauled off in a 10-ton truck. From there the legend grew, that truck eventually becoming a military M123 low-loader that, having travelled unnoticed (and illegally) on public highways and at implausible speed to the 'crash site', managed to negotiate the woods and trundle off to who knows where with what had become an acorn-shaped alien cargo. Witnesses came forth to confirm all this. The 'acorn' acquired strange 'hieroglyphic' markings, the way crashed UFOs always do. The military threatened civilians with guns to keep them away. The only thing missing from the tale is someone spying an alien's arm hanging out from under a sheet (no body bags in 1965 – they were all being reserved for the battle of Ia Drang?).

Even without that detail, the parallels with the Roswell story are apparent. But eventually it seems to have wormed its way into some parts of the ufological skull that perhaps the acorn wasn't alien after all. Sterling and trenchant work, especially by Robert Young, had rather undermined that idea. (For the most comprehensive account and deconstruction of the Kecksburg 'crash', see SUNlite Vol 3 No 6, Nov.-Dec. 2011, at www.astronomyufo.com/UFO/SUNlite3_6.pdf.) But the worm of a notion that a secret satellite of some kind crashed at Kecksburg was still alive.

So, in 2015, John Ventre of MUFON and Owen Eichler proposed that the Kecksburg incident was caused by a GE Mark 2 capsule from a Program 437 rocket launched from Johnson Island in the Pacific on 7 December 1965. The major difficulty with this wheeze was that the launch in question used a single-stage, sub-orbital Thor rocket that had no chance of putting a falling satellite anywhere near Kecksburg.

LEFT: A model of the crashed object created for the show *Unsolved Mysteries* on display near Kecksburg fire station.

Now along comes one Dr Bob Wenzel Gross, musician and educator, to tell us (courtesy of Frank Warren's *UFO Chronicles* website) that the Kecksburg acorn was actually a secret Corona spy-camera satellite launched from Vandenburg AFB on 9 December 1965. Gross maintains that "instead of heading south, the rocket system headed for a launch trajectory that would cut a northeasterly path across the United States... In an attempt to regain control of Satellite KH-4A 1027's orientation, the foreword recovery vehicle (SRV-1) was separated from the spacecraft. The separation was done at some time before the engine burn that would have injected the satellite into orbit." And, so, the satellite landed at Kecksburg.

Two little local difficulties here. First: the official record of the launch says the satellite was successfully put into orbit but lost stability on orbit 15. It was dumped on orbit 17 and recovered from the ocean by aircraft on 10 December. Kecksburg is some distance from the sea. Second: contemporary reports from Kecksburg mention nothing about odd bits of kit being hauled out of the wood, by low-loader, camel train, hordes of coolies, or whatever. Objections along these lines to Dr Gross elicited what can only be called ramblings about government disinformation, *&c &c ad soporem*, which scarcely clarified matters that had been clear enough from day one.

LA CONFIDENTIAL

Meanwhile, some forgotten old news has become new again. You may well be amazed to learn that beneath Hollywood there are worse things to fear than the casting couches up above. According to Disclose.tv, via the NeonNettle website, "a map of underground tunnels and cities has exposed reptilian 'lizard people' who have allegedly been secretly living directly under Hollywood, Los Angeles. The tunnels are said to be equipped with 'huge chambers' that are big enough to house 1,000 families. The Reptilians were discovered by a mining engineer named George Warren Shufelt back in 1933. Shufelt was the inventor of what he called the radio X-ray machine, a device that enabled him to detect tunnels underground. Shufelt was in possession of the underground map which detailed the tunnels and cities the reptilians lived under Hollywood, Los Angeles. Of course, nobody has seen the map until now." (Pause here to note that the website reproduces *Los Angeles Times* articles of 1934 with said maps.) There are apparently 285 tunnels covering "1,900 sq ft of tunnels along with rooms that had 9,000 ft of floor space and 16 rooms in which gold was stored" – loads of it, apparently. Shufelt, who seems to have failed to patent his ground penetrating radar, didn't find any. Those inclined to give credence to this tale should be warned that the website also features the deathbed confession of a former MI5 agent that he bumped off Princess Di, and the news that an ancient text "confirms that Jesus Christ was a reptilian shape shifter". And you may be assured that when not writing this column and sampling fine wines and numerous dusky virgins, I relax in my true shape as one of Ken Livingstone's newts.

AND FINALLY...

My colleague Jenny Randles has revived *NUFON News* after a 16-year hiatus, and has been instrumental in getting Alan Godfrey's autobiographical volume *Who or What Were They?* published. See www.ozfactorbooks.com for details. One gathers Mr Godfrey doesn't think much of the analysis David Clarke, Andy Roberts and I put forward of his experience (**FT269:44-47**, **270:46-49**). I'll read the book and report on what I find.

RYRIGHT / CREATIVE COMMONS

Autumn falls

JENNY RANDLES looks at the history of the 'falling leaf' effect observed in some UFO cases

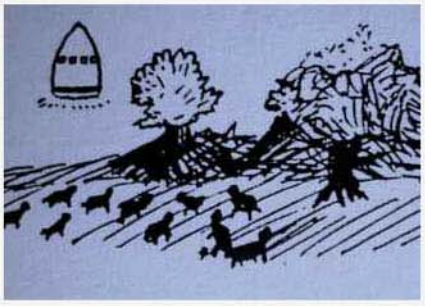
Fall, as the Americans call autumn, describes the period when leaves drop from the trees to carpet the ground below. What exactly has that got to do with UFOs? Perhaps quite a lot, because one of the least discussed elements of our subject is the 'falling leaf' effect shown by many UFOs in flight.

The best way to illustrate is with an example. One of the first cases documented in the UK appeared in the Air Ministry archives for 1952 involving a sighting that took place during NATO exercise Operation Mainbrace. Many aircraft and ships were involved and several UFO sightings occurred over a three-day period that exhibited this effect. One was witnessed by six RAF officers at RAF Topcliffe in Yorkshire at 10.53am on 19 September. They were watching a Meteor jet heading into nearby RAF Dishforth when they saw a small top-like object that seemed to follow it. It descended, as they described it, "riding air currents like a falling leaf". In other words, moving from side to side and continuing to 'sway' as it dropped slowly toward the ground; this motion ended when it then sped up and shot away.

The earliest such report was from the USA in 1947; many cases are from that era and involved trained air crew, who perhaps saw a resemblance to the aerobatic motion in which an aircraft moves its wings on one side, then the other, to create a swaying, leaf-like descent. The falling leaf effect was once more common than it is today, which might suggest that it was then new to ground observers viewing the sky but later became familiar enough not to be perceived as noteworthy.

We see the same effect with some recent types of IFO. When the first communication satellites started to go up during the 1960s, the sight of a moving 'star' much too slow for a meteor led to UFO reports – until people became used to what they were seeing. And when these artificial satellites started to decay and burn up in the atmosphere after a few years – as became relatively common from the 1970s onward – the spectacular trail of debris that resulted was the cause of multi-witness sightings for many years until the cause became more widely understood.

Much the same happened with laser light displays in the 1980s and 1990s as the swirling lights reflected off low cloud, leading to a spate of sightings from witnesses who had never seen these sorts of lights before. And in the 2000s, the prolific use of Chinese fire lanterns at celebrations created a new sight of orange glows drifting across the sky



that were widely misperceived as UFOs for a few years until their true nature was known.

So, it is feasible, given such misperceptions of any new stimulus in the sky, that some novel aviation technology witnessed by people on the ground for the first time 65 years ago might have been behind the 'falling leaf' UFOs. One simple example of this would be a parachute canopy, which sways from side to side as it slowly falls; these were only seen by people from the ground in any numbers after the 1940s. In fact, a parachute was what the RAF officers at first assumed they were watching in bright sunlight on that day in September 1952. But they soon realised that the subsequent behaviour of the object – accelerating away laterally and very fast – ruled that out. Other options were considered, such as a descending weather balloon, although, again, none of these was present at the time.

It is the effect of air resistance on falling objects that causes them to act in this way. A leaf is the most commonly viewed example of something with a large surface area that experiences impedance in its fall under gravity in such a marked way. You can do a simple experiment to see this. Drop a thin sheet of paper from head height to the ground. Hold it horizontally and let it fall in the way a leaf would and it 'wafts' from side to side, displaying the 'falling leaf' effect because of the pressure changing on different parts of the sheet with resultant shifts in the angle to the horizontal. Now drop the same sheet held vertically downward and it behaves differently, falling straight down and possibly only starting any sideways swoop quite near the floor: there is less opportunity for unequal forces to control the descent, and the profile cutting through the air is much narrower than when the sheet is held flat. This is why if you now scrunch up the same paper into a ball and drop it, it will not show any obvious side motion. In all three cases the paper has exactly the same mass – but varying the surface area means it falls in different ways because of how air moves around the shape.

A more modern falling leaf case was described to me by a family on 13 June 2000 in a farmhouse near Ribchester in Lancashire. They had been plagued by motorbike-like noises and feared youths were riding one at night on their land. On heating it at 11pm one night, the husband found that the noise was from a harvester being used by a local farmer. However, hovering low over a nearby tree was a spinning top shape, illuminated by the near full Moon and with several blue-lit 'portholes' around the middle. As the witness watched the UFO descend, it 'swayed' slowly from side to side in an effect he described to me as the 'falling leaf', seemingly familiar with the term (see witness sketch above).

A small light then appeared to circle around the object and the witness rushed off to call the police whilst his wife came to the window. The spinning top had vanished before she got there but she watched a flock of sheep flee from the spot where the UFO had been, while the family dog was now cowering behind the curtains in fear.

Astronomer Ian Ridpath believes that the falling leaf motion reported in many UFO sightings such as this is caused by 'autokinesis', where straining to see a light causes the witness to superimpose the jerky side-to-side motion of their eye muscles onto the star or planet they are really seeing – thus misleading them into thinking that it must instead be a swaying UFO. This effect does happen in some nocturnal light cases, but I have rarely heard it described as a falling leaf effect and it is harder to match with complex cases like the one above or daytime observations such as Topcliffe where multiple witness all saw the same motion.

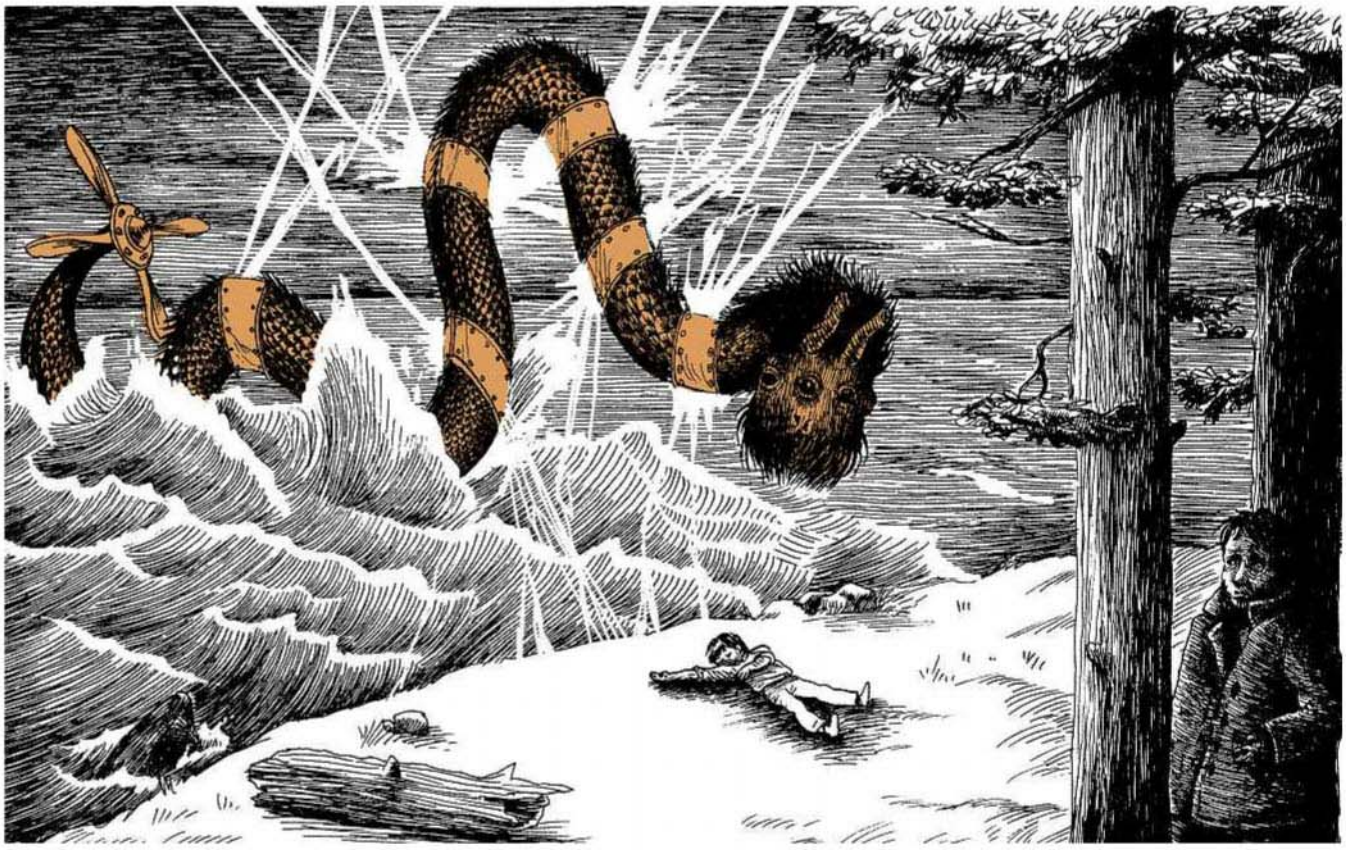
This is another reason why the falling leaf effect could be significant. It may well be an inherent factor of the motion within the UFO itself (whatever a UFO is) following logical principles of atmospheric physics for an airborne object – which is not something most witnesses will realise they are describing. This would support the proposition that witnesses are observing a real-world event and consistently describing an internal dynamic of the phenomenon that they perceive, rather than some kind of illusion that is less likely to follow such laws of nature. It would also offer hard evidence of the physical nature of whatever phenomenon is being observed – which in UFO research is rare enough for us to pay attention.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

72 STEAMPUNK BESTIARY: METAL MONSTERS AND ELECTRIC SERPENTS

THEO PAIJMANS uncovers some truly bizarre mechanoid terrors of the 19th century's age of industry



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

As the 19th century with its rapid industrial expansion was drawing to a close, a new breed of monster emerged from the pages of the American newspapers. The anatomies of these steampunk horrors with their machinelike parts and metal hides mimic the age of boilers, rivets and cast-iron, and Tesla and Edison with their war of the currents.

What Charles Wooden and Charles Adams caught in the Delaware river one April day in 1889 for instance, was 'The strangest creature ever seen': "It fought hard, and, uttering a noise that was half hiss, half bark, it seized an oar in its mouth and crunched it to splinters". It also released a "strange odour resembling musk". The creature was about 6ft (1.8m) long, "with a large head shaped like a bulldog's and an immense mouth furnished with two rows of sharp teeth". Two small and deep sunken eyes glared from a monstrous head, protected by long lashes. The head was attached to the body by a long neck from which stuck "two short, imperfectly formed legs, with webbed feet like those of a duck". It was covered in short, fine fur – but this was not all: "The tail is peculiarly formed, having four blades exactly like the screws of a propeller." [1]

> "The object crossed my path, and as it did so I felt the air grow colder, and a peculiar moaning sound arose, like the sighing of the wind through the trees..."

Three years later, Jerrold Thompson, Aaron Jobbings and Charles Engel started out on an early morning journey to Norristown, Pennsylvania. They were approaching the Old Oaks cemetery when they heard peculiar ringing and hissing noises. They saw a thing "as long as a fence rail" and about a foot in diameter where the body was thickest. It had a head like a horse and "from between its eyes and extending to the top of the head and for a short distance down its body was a growth of bristle-like hair that stood up like the clipped mane of a mule. Back from where the hair ended was on either side a web-like protuberance nearly a foot in length and much the shape of an elephant's ear". The monster was covered with heart-shaped scales that gave out a metallic ring, sounding like a small sleigh bell, "though more silvery". The colour of the monster was "a beautiful bronze green, with a row of purple on either side which blended gradually to almost a pure white on its under parts. Its tail was like that of a fish." [2]

Four years later, a newspaper claimed that a

new breed of metal leviathans was cavorting in the sea. The smallest was as broad as a rowboat and as long as a sailing vessel, and these serpents were the nightly talk of the East Coast: "Seamen tell of the cunning of this new sea serpent. They tell of two serpents interlocking horn and dorsal fin to make a stretch of 30ft [9m] long, and of another serpent joining itself to this great muscular chain. Stretched under the keel of a boat and clasping its sides high upon the hull, they can give an awful pressure that will make the timbers creak and cause the armour to bend like tin." On one occasion, one of these sea serpents was seen from nearby: "… there appeared above the water an ugly black head. It was the shape of a horse's head about 10ft [3m] long, with a great horn growing out of its nose. The expression of its mouth was a laughing one, and inside there gleamed two rows of deadly white teeth. Above the teeth glistened the long fishy eyes peculiar to a man-shark." It was covered with what looked like "a coat of mail. The colour was the subdued glisten of oxidised silver, except the tail, which turned to gold." [3]

Three years before, one day in April 1893, farmer Mark Weston, living near the small town of Alexander, Indiana, encountered an electric terror. Weston was going to his barn to look after his horses one evening, when he saw "something playing along on the ground that looked like a tremendous fiery snake. The object crossed my path, and as it did so I felt the air grow much colder, and a peculiar moaning sound arose, like the sighing of the wind through the trees, only it was loud enough to drown a man's voice when he would shout. Then I felt something come over me like electricity, and I became motionless, as though I had grown fast to the ground".

Thinking there must be something "peculiar in the air" that had paralysed him, he noticed how "the thing had got perhaps 50ft [15m] from me, going west, it turned and came back, and as it did so the moaning sound changed to a shrill whistle, something like a locomotive would make…" It travelled very rapidly and looked like "a large, ragged streak of fire, perhaps 30ft [9m] long and 18in [46cm] in diameter". When it reached the barn, it ran over it in every direction. It stopped in front of the barn, elevating itself straight on its tail, "fully 30ft [9m] in the air". The poor farmer was still unable to move, but after a few minutes the thing disappeared with the sound of an explosion. "With the disappearance of the strange phenomenon I felt a shock like the first one I had felt, and at the same time I gained control of my limbs." Weston found that the barn was covered with "a remarkable network resembling large ropes of ice. They appeared to pass around the building in exactly the same way the fiery monster had passed. It was not ice, however, but seemed to be more of a crystal, for it would not melt, even when we held a flame to it, and when struck with a hatchet, it simply gave a dull-like sound, and did not break". Inside the barn he found his two horses unable to move, and his dog dead and petrified.[4]

Three months later, a fishing party at Black Fish Bay, Washington, met with another electric terror. The men, William Fitzhenry, HL Beal, WL McDonald, JK Bell, Henry Blackwood and two unnamed men, had made a camp on its shore. The party soon went to sleep. Around midnight they were awoken by a terrible noise and, as one of the men described, "instantly the whole air was filled with a strong current of electricity that caused every nerve in the body to sting with pain, and a light as bright as that created by the concentration of many arc lights kept constantly flashing." They saw a monster slowly swimming towards the shore. "As it approached, from its head poured out a stream of water that looked like blue fire. All the while the air seemed to be filled with electricity, and the sensation experienced was as if each man had on a suit of clothes formed of the fine points of needles." One of the party, who stepped towards the shoreline, was hit by a stream of water and fell down as if dead. The panic-stricken men scattered in the woods. Roaring like thunder, the monster sent out flashes of light that illuminated the countryside for miles around. Finally it retreated into the water. The men could trace the course of the monster for some time, the man said, "by a bright luminous light that was on the surface of the water". With the monster gone, the electric sensation had also stopped, but: "We were unable to tell the time, as the powerful electric force had stopped our watches." The 'demon of the deep' or 'electric fish' as the men named it, was a behemoth of some 150ft (46m) long and 30ft (9m) in diameter at its thickest part. "Its shape was somewhat out of the ordinary in so far that the body was neither round nor flat but oval, and from what we could see the upper part of the body was covered with a very coarse hair. The head was very much shaped like a walrus… Its eyes, of which it apparently had six, were as large around as a dinner plate and were exceedingly dull, and it was about the only spot on the monster that at one time or another was not illuminated. At intervals of about every eight feet [2.4m] from its head to its tail a substance that had the appearance of a copper band encircled its body, and it was from these many bands that the powerful electric current appeared to come. The bands nearest the head seemed to have the strongest electric force, and it was from the first six bands that the most brilliant lights were emitted. Near the centre of its head were two large, hornlike substances, though they could not have been horns for it was through them that the electrically charged water was thrown. Its tail from what I could see of it was shaped like a propeller, and seemed to revolve…" [5]

Representatives of this steampunk bestiary would manifest themselves well into the first half of the 20th century. An uncanny 'lightning ghost' terrorised the community of Rahway, New Jersey, in 1905 for instance. "The spook, which has chased several young men, is described as being very tall (about 7ft [2m] in height) outlined in and emitting phosphorescent rays of light and impregnating the air about him with an odour of ozone." [6]

And then there was the last remaining 'horrible Hypnobatteryboob' or 'Horned Magnet of Labrador' that Col. Amos Talleyrand Luther almost fell victim to. Camping in the Maine woods he was forced upright from his sleeping position and dragged though the trees by an irresistible, invisible force that acted "like a magnet" towards this bizarre creature. The Hypnobatteryboob was 15ft (4.6m) high and more than 20ft (6m) in length. It had horns fore and aft, and "an immense hump rising from the centre of his back". Its head slightly resembled that of a camel, "except for the ears, which were as large as those of an elephant and stood straight out like immense fans. His feet were webbed, and his legs, apparently, were double-jointed. Two tusks projected downward from his upper jaw, he was covered with dense curly hair, and under the rays of the high-rising Moon his colour was that of fresh-minted gold. The odour of the beast was sickening and offensive in the extreme, not unlike that of steak smothered in onions". The mysterious traction beam-like force that the monster used to draw in the victim was explained as "animal magnetism".[7]

NOTES

1 'Strange Sea Animal. He is a Fighter and Wears a Screw Propeller', *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, Pittsburgh, PA, 4 April 1889. The story was reprinted in several newspapers into July.

2 'The Modern Mystery. A Strange Monster That Wore Gold Scales', *Davenport Tribune*, Davenport, Iowa, 7 Dec 1892 and *Idaho Falls Times*, Idaho Falls, IA, 2 Feb 1893.

3 'Mile Long Sea Serpents', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, PA, 24 May 1896.

4 'A Tall Snake Story. An Electrical Monster Thirty Feet Long That Leaves a Trail of Ice', *The News*, Frederick, MD, 8 April 1893. Published after that in many American newspapers well into July, usually headed 'An Electrical Snake'.

5 'An Electric Monster. Flashes of Light and Terrible Sounds Emitted by One in the Bay', *Tacoma News Ledger*, Tacoma, WA, 3 July 1893.

6 'A Jersey Lightning Ghost', *Sun*, Baltimore, MD, 10 +11 July 1905; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Philadelphia, PA.

7 'Luther Saved From Hypnobatteryboob', *Boston Journal*, Boston, MA, 12 Dec 1913.

Patty at 50

THE PATTERSON/GIMLIN FILM REVISITED

Fifty years ago Roger Patterson and Bob Gimlin claimed to have encountered and filmed a living Bigfoot. The resulting footage – the Zapruder film of the fortean world – has been dissected, debunked and defended for five decades. **STU NEVILLE** casts a British eye on an unlikely screen icon, while **TODD PRESCOTT** provides an historical overview.

I remember the first time I ever saw Bigfoot. It was on 6 July 1975. I was ready for the encounter, poised, still, binoculars around my neck and trusty Bowie knife on the belt of my Kung Fu dressing gown. I was eight years old, and not in Oregon, but a South Bristol living room, cross-legged in front of our Granada black and white television with its luxurious 20-inch screen. I was already obsessed with the Abominable Snowman, as it was then widely known, and so got unreasonably excited when my father told me that there was a programme on that coming Sunday evening featuring the Yeti. I was delighted, ringed the entry in the *Radio Times* for *The World About Us: Monsters! Mysteries or Myths?* about 40 times in crayon, and waited for what seemed a century until I found myself about three feet from the screen, not wanting to miss a thing.

I didn't miss a thing. I sat rapt. Forty-two years on, of the programme itself I remember little. I'm fairly certain it was David Attenborough's voice, but then it always was. Fleeting images of Nessie, the Spicer Loch-side sighting, the Surgeon's photo; next on to snowy pictures of various Himalayas, lamas, yeti-scalps and heavily-bearded men in parkas seeing distant dark figures, and then...

Footage of forested vistas, people in Stetsons, folksy-looking, log-built general stores with a backdrop of redwoods and mountains. A gentle camera glide along a woodland path... suddenly shaking as if

GRANGER HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

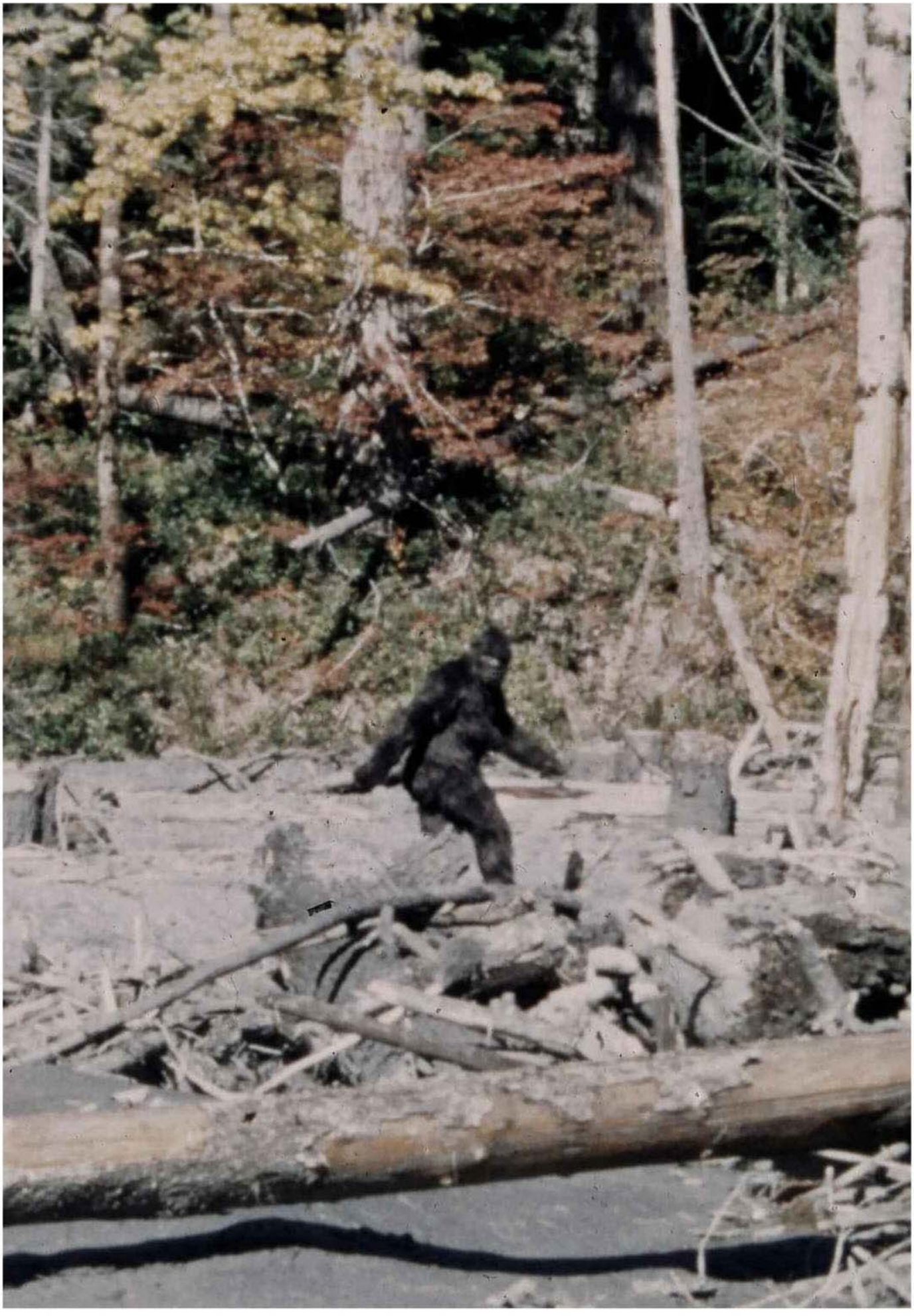
LEFT: Bob Gimlin and Roger Patterson examine plaster casts of Bigfoot prints in 1967. **FACING PAGE:** A detail from frame 352 of the Patterson/Gimllin film.

Less than half a minute of blurry, jumpy footage, but utterly captivating

running... and there it was. Walking away from us, brisk but not bolting, a brief turn to look at the camera and then stepping over fallen branches and into the trees. Less than half a minute of actual footage, blurry and jumpy but utterly captivating, and to the very young, impressionable cryptozoologist at once hypnotic and, strangely, frightening. As has become the custom, it was shown again in slow-motion, and frozen at the turn: the famous – or infamous – frame 352.

I'd never heard of Bigfoot before, but the single, iconic image fascinated and slightly terrified me. I had no way of reviewing the moving footage – VCRs were still years away – so I had to be content with stills, inevitably of frame 352, in compendium books which devoted anything up to two pages to Bigfoot, and a sentence or two of that would be about 'Patty'.

The next time I saw her was a few years later, still in black and white, as a brief mention in David Attenborough's *Fabulous Animals*, but he didn't pronounce judgement on whether or not Patty, or the wider Bigfoot narrative, had any reality to it. I finally got to see her – by then I knew it was a her – in colour, in September 1980 in *Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World* (part four, "The



ABOVE LEFT: Bob Gimlin appears in the fouth episode of *Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World* in 1980. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Roger Patterson shows off some plaster casts.

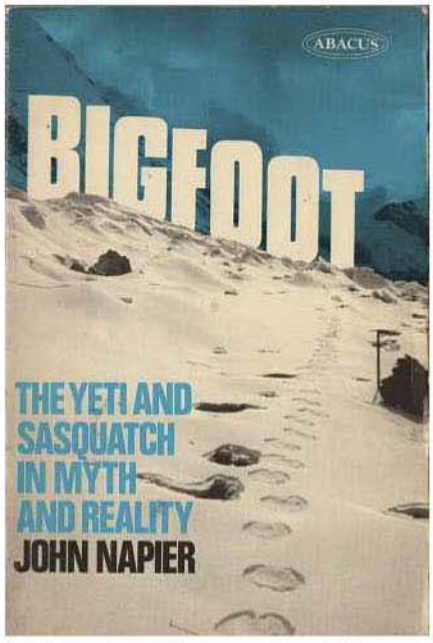
Missing Apemen"), in which the Great Sage of Taunton declared himself unconvinced by the footage (bear in mind, this was a man who weekly, in the opening titles, set up his astronomical telescope on the beach, in broad daylight, so his judgement may be open to question.) I was rapt all over again. By then I had amassed a number of books about Bigfoot, most of which devoted some discussion to the Patterson footage. Was it real? Was it a suit? Did Patterson fake it? Did Gimlin help him? Were they both pranked?

All of these questions sound relatively easy to address. In fact, they prove quite the opposite.

THE FOOTAGE

Let's start with what we can say for sure about the footage itself. It's about one minute in duration, but even this depends on the film speed. The context with which we are presented is that Roger Patterson and Robert 'Bob' Gimlin – on horseback and looking to film a Bigfoot for a documentary Patterson wanted to produce – rounded a corner and encountered what they say was an adult, female Sasquatch, approximately seven feet in height. The horses shied, Patterson jumped down, grabbed the film camera and ran toward the figure, filming as he ran (hence the jerky footage before the figure comes into frame). This is the beginning of the most familiar section of the film: it runs to around 30 seconds, from initial glimpse of the figure, through the turn, and to the edge of the treeline. There is then a more distant view of the figure's back as it disappears into the trees. This filmed sequence is the only actual, primary source relating to the whole incident. Everything else is secondary, from alleged footprint casts, to the anecdotal evidence of the event itself, to the mass of inconsistencies in accounts of what happened immediately before and after.

Did Patterson fake it? Did Gimlin help him? Were they both pranked?



The first, most basic question after seeing it is, of course: does the footage show a real creature or a human being in a suit? Even this is not an entirely binary question; however, for our present purposes we'll disregard the various theories about Bigfoot being a multi-dimensional entity and take it as read that that the film shows a living, sentient entity and not an animation or puppet, or superimposition on the print. The issue of whether it's a genuine sasquatch or a costumed actor is one we will address presently.

One of the first issues concerns the speed at which the film should be viewed. The camera that Patterson had hired could operate at several speeds. The slowest practical speed (16 frames per second) was the most economical, as the same quantity of film could glean a number of minutes of extra footage, but at the expense of quality. The highest regular speed (24fps) uses up film stock 50 per cent faster, but the definition is much higher, and is also the most compatible speed with analogue television. Patterson stated that he didn't know at which speed he had filmed the figure, as in the rush he had just picked up the camera and started shooting. Why does this matter? Because the speed at which the film is viewed drastically alters the figure's gait. According to Dr Don Grieve, Reader in Biomechanics at London Royal Free Hospital who analysed the film in 1971 (along with a reconstruction using a human to replicate the sequence), the frame rate crucially alters the physiological properties of the creature's walking motion: at 16 or 18 fps, there are important differences from normal human locomotion, most notably the time it takes to stride and the corresponding length of arm-swing. Grieve then points out that the gait at 16 or 18 fps would be extremely inefficient. The metabolic cost would be unnecessarily high, as it would overuse the musculature and joints and thus use more calories than it needed to: animals generally move in as economical manner as possible, conserving energy, and the creature in the film swings its arms too much, and its stride is too exaggerated to represent efficient use of physical resources. He does, however, observe that if its physical make-up was sufficiently different from that of a human it might explain why its

gait is at such variance. Grieve then makes the crucial observation that if the film was shot at 24 fps, the gait is indistinguishable from that of a human being walking quickly and in an exaggerated manner. Grieve also confirms that the creature's height is around 196cm (6ft 5in), giving an estimated weight of 127kg (280lb), which would render at most a 30cm (12in) footprint, which is well within normal human range, and at variance with Patterson's estimate of a 7ft (215cm), "very heavy" creature. Other discrepancies then start to become apparent.

STEPPING OUT

In his book *Bigfoot: The Sasquatch and Yeti in Myth and Reality*, the primatologist and palæoanthropologist John Napier states that the footprints Patterson cast after the sighting, which Patterson claimed were those of the filmed figure, were closer to 15in (37cm) long, which would indicate a much taller creature – at least 7ft 8in (234cm) in height, with an indicative 53in (135cm) stride: however, the distance between the footprints is only 41in (104cm), whereas a 6ft 5in (195cm) humanoid would have at least a 45in (114cm) gap, and given the exaggerated stride of the creature in the film it would be closer to 48-50in (c.125cm), which largely tallies with Grieve's estimates. So, the footprints that Patterson presented belong to a supposedly much taller being, but with a markedly shorter step than the one in the film. Whatever their provenance, Napier concludes that the two items – film and prints – do not belong together.

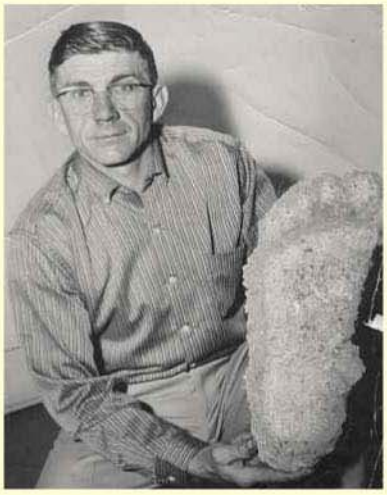
He then draws on his own experience as an anatomist (he started his career as an orthopædic surgeon) to look at the physical composition of the figure itself. Napier, like Grieve, views the creature's gait as "grossly exaggerated", and further says that it looks self-conscious. In spite of the pendulous breasts, which would seem to indicate that the creature is female, there is no widening of the hips and its walk is unmistakeably male. In addition, the size of the upper body would imply that its centre of gravity should be much higher than that of a human; however, the gait indicates that, actually, it's in roughly the same place. The creature appears to have a sagittal crest (the conical shape at the top of the head) which in great apes provides an anchor point for additional jaw muscles; once again, this is a male trait, almost never seen in females. It also has buttocks, which are uniquely human, and are entirely consistent with both the walk and the centre of gravity. In conclusion, Napier states that the creature has both female and male characteristics, has a superficially simian upper half, a distinctly human lower half and walks like an exaggerated human. The footprints attributed to it don't match in any way at all. However, despite all of this, he stops short of declaring the film an outright fake: in fact, he was the first to coin the phrase "can't see the zipper". It was only the footprint evidence which he discounted entirely; further, he declared that on balance he *did* believe in the objective reality of Bigfoot – he just didn't necessarily buy Patty.

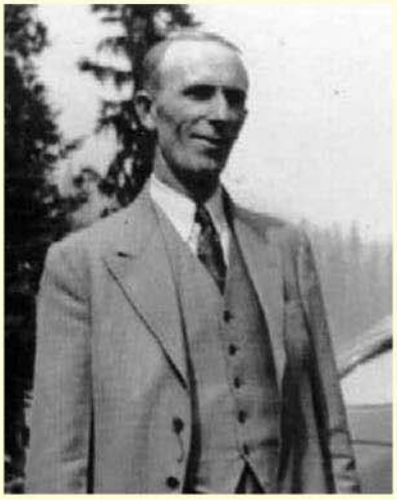
Of course, for every expert there is an equal and opposite expert. Grover Krantz and Jeff Meldrum, both strong academic proponents of the flesh-and-blood Bigfoot hypothesis, each found the film convincing (although Krantz initially dismissed it.) Krantz disagreed with most of Napier and Grieve's objections, finding that in his opinion the centre of gravity and gait were not human-like; and both he and Meldrum felt that the walking motion itself was both entirely natural-looking and, furthermore, would be very difficult for a human to replicate.

This opinion was further echoed by the evergreen Russian researchers Dimitri Bayanov and Igor Burtsev, who along with Canadian-Swiss René Dahinden conducted an in-depth study of the footage. They consulted Nikita Lavinsky, a sculptor specialising in anatomy, who argued that an extremely detailed costume would do more to betray a hoax than to augment it by hindering the suit-wearing actor's possible movements. They also point out that the upper body seems fluid and coherent, which given the creature's apparent breadth across the shoulders would seem to mitigate against someone wearing padding: the arms start where the shoulders end, with no obvious indentation or buckling at the joint. Interestingly, there is little attention given to the footprint evidence from the scene – maybe tacit agreement with Napier that there's no continuity of evidence there anyway. (According to their account, Patterson and Gimlin didn't cast the prints until later, having left their plaster back at their campsite a number of miles away, which seems to show a strange lack of preparedness. There are quite a few niggles like this in the story.)

BEFORE PATTY

TODD PRESCOTT DELVES INTO BIGFOOT'S EARLY YEARS





When Europeans arrived in North America, they quickly learned about the Natives' belief in another biped hominoid (besides humans) that lived in the woods. Nearly each and every North American Native People have a word or two in reference to what we now know as Sasquatch or Bigfoot. Soon, some of the new arrivals were also claiming sightings of the creatures. However, the hairy giants didn't make a big splash on the New World's map until the pivotal year of 1958, when the Associated Press wires were abuzz on account of a Mr Jerry Crew (above left) of Eureka, California presenting a cast of an alleged Bigfoot print from the Bluff Creek area of Northern California, where Patterson and Gimlin would later film their famous footage. Photos of Crew's cast went viral (as we'd say today) across North America and elsewhere. Pre-dating all the hoopla of 1958, Canada had already seen its own distinct share of media coverage of Bigfoot, named by John W Burns (above right) in 1927 as 'Sasquatch', supposedly after a Chehalis word for the creatures. Burns can arguably be considered the first-ever Sasquatch researcher, and his writings about the creature found their way into the *Chilliwack Progress* (a British Columbia newspaper), Canada's *Liberty* magazine, and various pulps, including *The Wide World* and *SIR!*. But Burns's first known magazine article found its way into the pages of *Maclean's* magazine. The year was 1929, and the date was 1 April, but Burns' article was far from a joke. Aptly titled "Introducing B.C.'s Hairy Giants", his article predates by nearly 30 years Bigfoot's coming out party in the US.

50 YEARS ON: A TIMELINE OF

Never has a film of a supposed cryptid created as much controversy as the Patterson/Gimlin film (PGF), purportedly showing a Bigfoot. There is other supposed footage of cryptids – the Loch Ness Monster, Chupacabras, Champ, and even other Bigfoot films and videos – but the king of all crypto-footage is the PGF. TODD PRESCOTT looks back at the most significant events that have occurred in relation to the famous film.

20 OCTOBER 1967

Roger Patterson and Robert 'Bob' Bob Gimlin filmed what they claimed was a Bigfoot walking along the creek bed of Bluff Creek in Northern California. Later that same day, they cast a right and left footprint in the sand along the creek left by the creature they filmed. Sometime after casting the footprints, the two men left the area to take the film to be sent off for processing.

21 OCTOBER 1967

According to researcher René Dahinden, the PGF was processed the day after the filming occurred. Where the film was processed remains a mystery, but it was done quickly and viewed at Patterson's brother-in-law's house just two days after the filming. *The Times Standard* newspaper, out of Eureka, California, ran an article about the PGF in its 21 Oct 1967 issue.

22 OCTOBER 1967

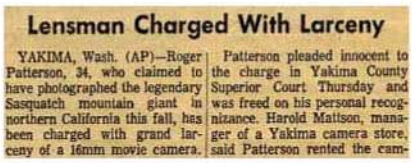
At Al DeAtley's house, Patterson, John Green, Jim McClarin, and René Dahinden repeatedly viewed the PGF. The numerous viewings damaged the sensitive film roll creating many surface scratches.

26 OCTOBER 1967

Much to the dismay of Patterson, Green, McClarin and Dahinden, a showing of the PGF to a group of scientists at the University of British Columbia did nothing to convince the academics that Patterson had filmed a Bigfoot. Reactions to the film were tepid at best. Another screening of the film for reporters in a local hotel occurred the same evening. The press covered the PGF in area newspapers such as the *Province*, *[Vancouver] Sun*, and *Daily Colonist*. While in British Columbia, Patterson and Gimlin were interviewed on Jack Webster's radio show discussing the PGF.

5 NOVEMBER 1967

Researcher Jim McClarin travelled to the PGF site with the hope of finding and filming the footprints left at the site. He found and filmed the footprints as well as filming himself walking the path of 'Patty'. Unfortunately, McClarin's 8mm film appears to have been lost forever.



Lensman Charged With Larceny

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP)—Roger Patterson, 34, who claimed to have photographed the legendary Sasquatch mountain giant in northern California this fall, has been charged with grand larceny of a 16mm movie camera.

Patterson pleaded innocent to the charge in Yakima County Superior Court Thursday and was freed on his personal recognizance. Harold Mattson, manager of a Yakima camera store, said Patterson rented the cam-

LEFT: *Argosy* magazine was the first publication to feature PGF stills and comprehensively cover the events surrounding the film.

BELOW LEFT: December 1967 newsclipping about Patterson being charged with grand larceny. Patterson did not return the rented Cine-Kodak K-100 16mm camera that he used for the PGF.

BOTTOM: In April 1968, *National Wildlife* magazine ran a comprehensive article on the PGF, which also included a useful map of 'Bigfoot Country'.

30 NOVEMBER 1967

Patterson appeared in court after being charged with grand larceny concerning failure to return the 16mm movie camera he used for the PGF. He was never convicted and pleaded innocence, but in some people's view, it called into question his integrity.

8 DECEMBER 1967

Patterson and his brother-in-law, Al DeAtley, had hopes of making money from the PGF. They travelled to New York City shortly after the footage was processed to meet executives from *LIFE* magazine, hoping to sell stills from the film to the ever-popular periodical. *LIFE* at first appeared interested but then baulked when the Smithsonian Institute would not endorse the film.

8 JANUARY 1968

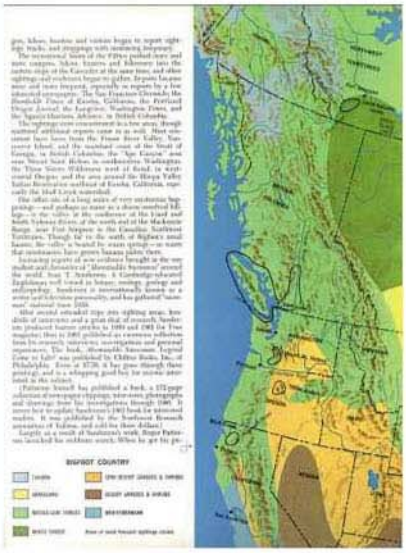
Canadian researchers John Green and René Dahinden purchased the Canadian lecture rights to the PGF so that they could show the film at schools and lecture halls. The two men paid $1,500 for the rights. In the end, they lost money because public interest in the film was minimal.

FEBRUARY 1968

Argosy magazine is the first known magazine to feature stills from the PGF both on the cover and inside the magazine. The lengthy article, by zoologist Ivan Sanderson, comprehensively details what supposedly occurred on 20 October, some of the aftermath, and the opinions of some scientists. The February issue has become a collectors' item fetching upwards of $300 on eBay. It appears as though Roger Patterson's second book, *Bigfoot Vol 1*, was also published in February of 1968. Patterson's tiny booklet was the first book to provide information regarding the PGF.

18 FEBRUARY 1968

Patterson made an appearance on *The Joe Pyne Show*. No footage of his appearance on the show has been made public since its airing, but it's presumed that he discussed the PGF. Patterson was also a guest on *The Alan Burke Show* around this time too – but no exact date for his appearance has been located at present, and it appears as if the footage has been lost forever. It is rumoured that Patterson also appeared on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* during the same period. However, at the present time, no conclusive evidence has surfaced proving that this is the case.



THE PATTERSON/GIMLIN FILM

APRIL 1968
Riding on the coattails of *Argosy*, *National Wildlife* magazine ran a comprehensive article about the PGF – complete with film stills – in its April/May 1968 issue.

23 JUNE 1968
Long-time researcher John Green, along with Jim McClarin, George Haas and a few others, filmed a recreation of the PGF with McClarin again walking the path of 'Patty' (also see 5 Nov 1967). To date, only photographs of the event have been released.

LEFT: Roger Patterson and the BBC co-produced the first-ever documentary about bigfoot, *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman*.

BOTTOM LEFT: Sasquatch Movie Poster. British Columbia researchers John Green and René Dahinden bought the Canadian lecture rights to the PGF in January 1968 but failed to turn over a profit when showing the film locally.

28 JULY 1968
In Britain, the BBC aired *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman*, Patterson's documentary completed in tandem with the BBC. It appears as though the documentary only aired once and only in the UK. Patterson would soon thereafter begin showing in West and Mid-West US theatres his own version of the documentary, which included more footage of himself and his brother-in-law, Al DeAtley, playing host. The BBC version was hosted by John Napier – a leading primatologist and then Director of the Primate Biology programme at the Smithsonian Institute. Napier was non-committal in his assessment of the PGF.

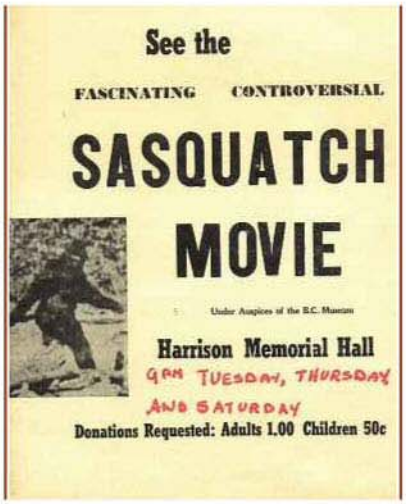
SEPTEMBER 1968
Beyond magazine featured a full frame and a half frame from the PGF on its cover. Although a tad late to the punch, the magazine article gives a synopsis of what transpired on 20 October 1967.

NOVEMBER 1968
John Green's debut book, *On the Track of the Sasquatch*, was self-published and the second to feature information regarding the PGF. Numerous books thereafter would feature the PGF event.

JANUARY 1969
Reader's Digest was very late to the game with their coverage of the PGF. The January issue includes four film frames and devotes nearly a full page to the event. Numerous magazine articles about Bigfoot and the PGF would appear thereafter.

5 OR 7 OCTOBER 1970
Although no known footage remains, it is believed that Roger Patterson appeared on *The Merv Griffin Show* to discuss the PGF.

NOVEMBER 1971
René Dahinden travelled to Europe with the



hopes of generating interest in the PGF. He made stops in England, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. This last stop showed the most promise, with the Russians taking a keen interest in the film. However, in England, Dr Donald Grieve, a Professor of Biomechanics at the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine in London and then at University College London, was quite intrigued with the film. He concluded that if the PGF was shot at 16 or 18 frames per second, it couldn't possibly be human. If the film was shot at 24 frames per second, it could have been human. He also felt that if it was a fake, it was an extremely clever one. The exact film speed used to make the film remains unknown.

4 FEBRUARY 1976
Bob Gimlin, along with René Dahinden, settled out of court with Patricia Patterson (Roger's widow). As a result, Gimlin now controlled one-third of the PGF. Additionally, the settlement gave Gimlin 51 per cent negotiator control of the film, 100 per cent of the publication rights, and compensation for any financial losses during the period 1967 to 1976. Rumour has it that Gimlin soon thereafter sold his share in the film to Dahinden for $10.

28 APRIL 1977
The immensely popular TV series *In Search Of . . .* aired its first episode about Bigfoot. Part of the PGF was featured in the episode.

20 OCTOBER 1992
Researcher Daniel Perez self-published his booklet, *BigfooTimes*, which details events before, during, and following the PGF.

JUNE 1998
Following a three-year investigation, Jeff Glickman, a forensic examiner, compiled and publicly released his extensive computer examination of the PGF in a report named "Toward A Resolution of the Bigfoot Phenomenon". Glickman concluded that the PGF could not be demonstrated to be a forgery.

2003
The PGF was extensively examined in the documentary *Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science*. Details previously not noted about the subject in the PGF were featured.

2005
Author/Researcher Christopher Murphy's book, *The Bigfoot Film Controversy*, provided comprehensive information regarding the PGF.

2014
Bill Munns, a makeup effects designer, had been studying the PGF for many years by the time he self-published his book on his findings. In Munns's book, *When Roger Met Patty*, he concluded that the PGF shows a biological primate, not a human wearing a fur/cloth costume.

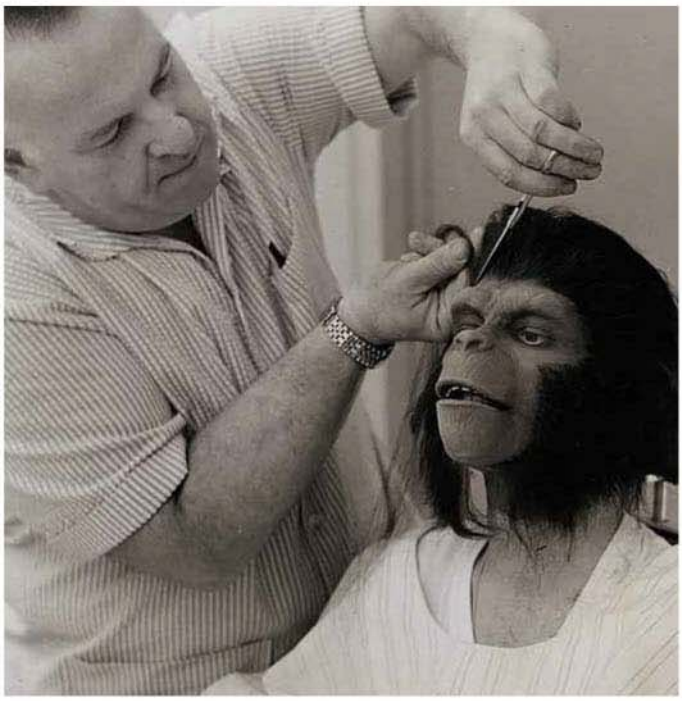
20 OCTOBER 2017
Numerous researchers and enthusiasts gathered near Bluff Creek, California, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the PGF.

TODD PRESCOTT is a Sasquatch researcher/author who resides in Ontario, Canada.

Most of these analyses were completed in the 1970s and 1980s. What the researchers lacked then was what we today have in abundance: computers, imaging tools of which they could have only dreamt, and the Internet. Google "Patterson Bigfoot" and you will find dozens, if not hundreds, of copies of the sequence, each with its own take on the action. Some have forensically examined every frame in extreme close-up, especially 352, and have observed a host of extra details (some of which the viewer may even be able to see too, given enough squinting, contrast-adjustment and – dare I say – wishful thinking. The Zapruder footage of Kennedy's assassination aside, it's probably the single most analysed moving image in the history of forteana. And as with Zapruder, there have been apparent breakthroughs… usually of brief duration. For a while, there were those who swore the figure was carrying a baby on its front, or that there was another figure in the forest... until others declared that there was no such thing.

To this day, the discussion continues about the figure in the film. There are plenty who continue to pronounce it fake, with an equal number challenging them to point to "the zipper".

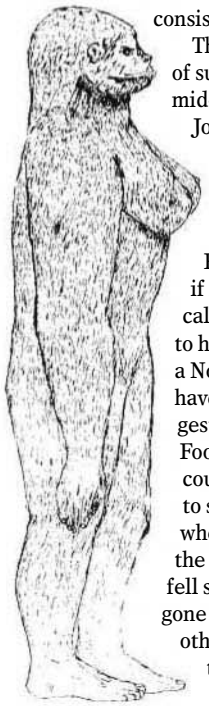
So: could it be a suit?



LEFT: Hollywood make-up artist John Chambers at work on *Planet of the Apes*. **BELOW LEFT:** Researcher René Dahinden talks to self-proclaimed Bigfoot abductee Albert Ostman. **BOTTOM LEFT:** A sketch of the female Bigfoot seen by William Roe.

SUITING UP

Roger Patterson was well aware of the two most detailed descriptions of Bigfoot, those of Albert Ostman and William Roe, both of which had been published no more than a dozen years before Patty's debut. Both men had observed female Bigfoots – in Ostman's case as part of the family that 'kidnapped' him. Each gave descriptions which tallied except regarding the width of the hips (Ostman stated they were very wide, Roe that they weren't, at least not in comparison with the rest of the torso: Napier suggests that Roe's sighting may have been a more juvenile female.) Roe and Ostman each had their alleged encounters in British Columbia, about 300 miles (483km) apart, while Patterson's was around 700 miles (1,127km) to the south in Northern California. The figure in the Patterson film is generally consistent with both these descriptions, the hip width conforming more with Roe's sighting, again either because it's an actual animal of the same species, or because Patterson ensured that the suit conformed to these parameters to lend it some consistency and, therefore, credibility.



The possibilities and practicalities of such a costume even existing in the mid-1960s have been discussed for years. John Chambers (make-up artist on *Planet of The Apes*) has been mooted as someone with the technical abilities at that time, though he himself strenuously denied having made the Patty suit, and went so far as to say that if it was a costume then it was technically very accomplished and would have to have been tailor-made. Philip Morris, a North Carolina costumier, claimed to have sold Patterson the suit in 1967, suggesting the actor inside wear American Football shoulder pads beneath it. He could not, however, provide any evidence to substantiate this claim, and in fact when challenged to recreate the suit (and the footage) for *National Geographic* he fell somewhat short; he has subsequently gone quiet on the issue. There have been other attempts to recreate it: in 1998, the BBC's *X Creatures* used a suit that looked more like Keith Harris's Cuddles the Monkey than Patty, with a walk even less convincing (but still enough for presenter Chris Packham to pronounce the original as a fake).

What is certain is that if a suit were used, then it's a very sophisticated one, which had to account for ease of movement as much as convincing appearance (as per Lavinsky). Such a costume would be impossible for an actor to don single-handedly.

With each improvement in technology, there is the hope that the image will yield some telling detail one way or another – but at the time of writing that remains as elusive as Bigfoot itself.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

So, we need to look at the other evidence surrounding the incident. Unfortunately, the most vocal proponent of the footage, Roger Patterson himself, passed away in early 1972, maintaining to the end that the film was not a hoax. The fact that Patterson had written a book about Bigfoot when it was still a strictly local phenomenon, was trying to raise money to make a documentary about the creature, and was incredibly fortunate to have a loaded camera ready when they stumbled upon one not too far from where they were camped could be seen as suspicious, but didn't deter him from pronouncing the film's authenticity. The only other identified participant, Bob Gimlin, refused to talk about it at all until about 10 years ago; and if truth be told, he hasn't said a whole lot since then. What he *has* said is that he does not believe that he participated in a hoax – which opens up four possibilities.

It was a hoax, in which both Patterson and Gimlin were complicit, and Gimlin is lying.

It was a hoax, which Patterson arranged, and Gimlin was duped.

It was a hoax, and both Patterson and Gimlin were duped.

Or… it wasn't a hoax at all.

To take them one by one.

Was Gimlin complicit? If he was, then it's perfectly possible that there were multiple takes of a man in a suit. With all day to get it right, the only risk was someone else catching them at it (or indeed a real, short-sighted randy male Bigfoot showing up). There could have been other people there, even, besides the three (Patterson, Gimlin, and whoever was in the costume). There are those who have claimed they *were* there, such as Bob Heironimus, who in 2004 went public with

the controversial, and largely discounted, story that he was the man wearing the Philip Morris Bigfoot suit that day; see **FT192:34-39**).

Or, if Gimlin wasn't complicit, the hoax would have involved a lot of preparation; an actor in a hot, uncomfortable suit sitting around for hours; a suit at least good enough to be convincing to the naked eye of an experienced woodsman, so probably intricate and nigh-impossible to get into alone; all taking place in a very remote area, with no trace of anybody else, if indeed anyone else was there. Not impossible, but a one-take deal. It has been suggested that Patterson's insistence that if they should encounter a Bigfoot they must not shoot it is evidence that he didn't want Gimlin, accidentally and unknowingly, injuring an actor.

Or, maybe neither was complicit, and both were pranked by a third party: but see above for the logistical likelihood of that with the added lack of guarantee that the pair would go anywhere near the spot. (See also: long lines of prints found in snow, miles from where anyone could be sure to see them before they melted; time-critical hoaxing relies entirely on reaction from an innocent party, otherwise it's utterly pointless.)

Or, the film shows a female bigfoot walking away from the camera.

There are other issues with the back-story. The timings, for a start. The period from film capture to first screening is an impressive 48 hours – it was shown in local theatres in Washington State two days later. The footage was claimed to have been shot at around 1.30pm. The pair claimed then to have tracked Patty on horseback for somewhere between one and three miles, followed by a trip back to the campsite to get plaster, back to the sighting area to cast the prints, then back to the campsite again; and they still managed to get around 50 miles (80km) south by 6.30pm to ship the film for processing: this must have been a busy five hours. In addition, it was a Friday evening.

This is important, as they were using Kodachrome II film, which could only be processed at certain laboratories. Patterson stated that he had shipped the film to his brother-in-law in Yakima, Washington, a distance of around 600 miles (970km), so it could only have been couriered by plane: the nearest lab to Yakima was a further 150 miles (240km) away in Seattle, which didn't process at weekends. In fact, the only lab at all likely to have been able to turn it around this quickly was Kodak's main one at Palo Alto, twice as close but in completely the opposite direction. No lab has ever come forward to admit having processed the film. The brother-in-law, Al DeAtley, remained very vague about details. It has been pointed out that if, in fact, the footage had been shot days or even weeks earlier, all of the timeline issues become redundant: but why obfuscate when it opens up yawning gaps in the story? There is a tremendously detailed and closely-argued discussion concerning these details and discrepancies on the *Fortean Times* online forum.

ABOVE LEFT: An attempt to recreate Patty in the series *X-Creatures*. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A key moment for Bigfoot's global reach as he appears in an episode of *The Six Million Dollar Man* in 1976.

PATTY LIVES!

What is indisputable is that the image quickly embedded itself into mainstream culture. The creature had stopped being a local legend – Sasquatch had gone global. Bigfoot made a couple of cameo appearances in TV series *The Six Million Dollar Man*, looking very like the Patterson figure. The footage has been used to advertise cola, lampooned by the Goodies and recreated by *The Simpsons*. Patty – frame 352 especially – has become an icon. The outline adorns T-shirts, necklaces and onesies. Her silhouette is immediately recognisable, the emblem of many Bigfoot research organisations and, indeed, of cryptozoology as a whole. For all of the miles of blurry Sasquatch footage that have followed, Patty is still the instantly recognisable one, her peculiar gait as iconic as Marilyn's skirt blown up around her waist by the air from a subway grate.

In all honesty, I don't know what the Patterson film shows. It could be an extremely clever fake; equally, however, I am quite willing to accept that Patterson was a chancer par-excellence who nevertheless, more by luck than judgement, managed to capture a live Bigfoot on film. If so, he managed to produce the perfect footage of an alleged cryptid: detailed enough to stand up to some scrutiny, but not sufficiently clear and triangulated to provide solid evidence.

The movie itself is a perfect embodiment of ambiguity. Just as with the Shroud of Turin, the actual nature of the figure portrayed is only half the story: the medium in which it's pictured is just as important. The fact that it still divides opinion and defies definitive debunking 50 years on, despite the progress made by technology and analysis, is itself remarkable. Even if it is one day proven unequivocally to be fake, it will remain as fortean an artefact as a Feejee Mermaid. Personally, I tentatively believe in the objective reality of Bigfoot, but I don't firmly believe that Patty is an actual example of one; I'll be pleasantly surprised if after all these years she is proven to be so. And, if not, it will be fascinating to see whether she keeps people guessing for another half a century…

With thanks to Coal, oldrover, Enola Gaia, David Plankton and MrRing of the FT forums for their invaluable input

STU NEVILLE is a Bristol-based teacher, lifelong fortean and administrator of the FT online forum.

REFERENCES

"Monsters! Mysteries or Myths?", *The World About Us,* BBC, 6 July 1975.

"The Missing Apemen", *Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World*, ITV, 23 Sept 1980.

"The Secret of Bigfoot", *The Six Million Dollar Man* (series 3, ep 17), Universal, 1 Feb 1976 (US Broadcast date).

"Shooting the Bigfoot", *X Creatures*, BBC, 16 Sept 1998.

DW Grieve, *Report on the Film of a Supposed Sasquatch*, 1971, reprinted in Napier, see below.

John Napier, *Bigfoot: The Sasquatch and Yeti in Myth and Reality*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1972.

Grover Krantz, *Bigfoot Sasquatch Evidence*. Los Angeles; Hancock House, 1999.

Dimitri Bayanov, *America's Bigfoot: Fact, Not Fiction.* Moscow; Crypto-Logo, 1997.

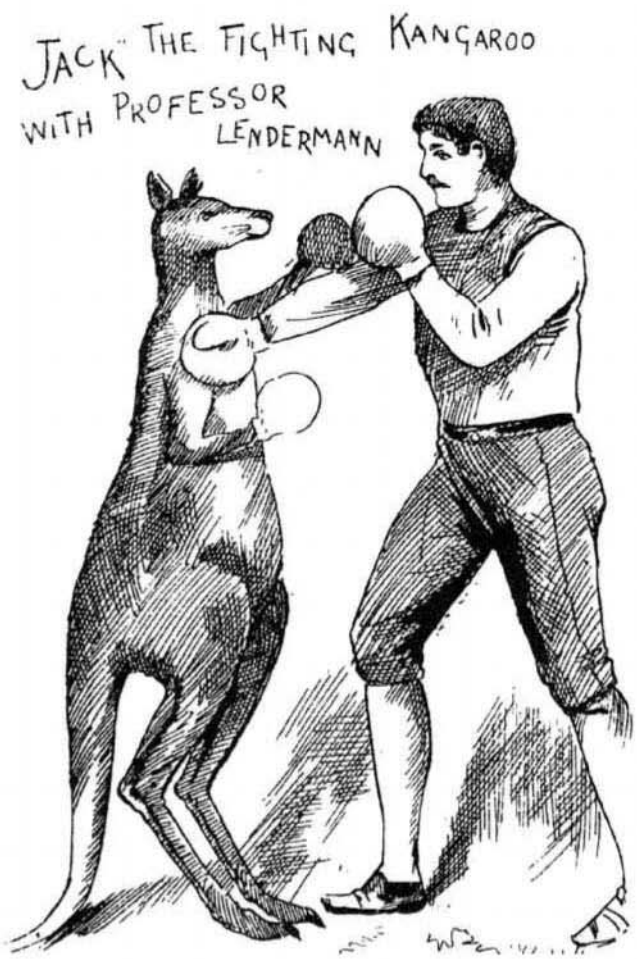
Jeff Meldrum, *Sasquatch: Legend Meets Science* New York; Forge Books, 2007.

Fortean Times forum: http://forum.forteantimes.com/index.php?threads/patterson-gimlin-bigfoot-film.1395/

From the Annals of Marsupial Pugilism

From the 1890s to the 1930s, boxing kangaroos were all the rage in circuses and music halls across Europe and the USA. **JAN BONDESON** explores this strange sporting sensation through the careers of Jack and Dempsey, Australian icons who conquered the world...

Richard 'Dick' Landermann was a sturdy young Australian who hailed from the village of Bonny Doon, Victoria, and worked as a teacher of boxing and gymnastics. A strong, capable young fellow with a liking for outdoor pursuits, he regularly went walkabout in the bush to catch kangaroos and other animals. In 1889, he captured a young kangaroo and had the idea of training the animal, which he named 'Jack', as a boxer. The kangaroo became very tame, and quite fond of its master. Making use of the male kangaroo's instinct to 'spar' and kick against a rival male, Landermann trained his kangaroo in front of a mirror, and after a number of months Jack seemed to have comprehended what was expected of him. The next step was to replace, in the creature's semi-dormant intellect, the image of the other kangaroo in the mirror with the flesh-and-blood figure of its trainer; again, after a number of months, the patient marsupial educator enjoyed success. In early 1891, after two years of painstaking tuition, Dick Landermann decided that his kangaroo was ready to make its debut on stage. Fitted with boxing gloves on his forepaws, Jack bounded about in the boxing ring like a champion, dodging Landermann's blows and striking out with his gloved paws. Occasionally, it was time for Landermann to go on the defensive, when Jack balanced on his tail and kicked out with his formidable, clawed rear legs.

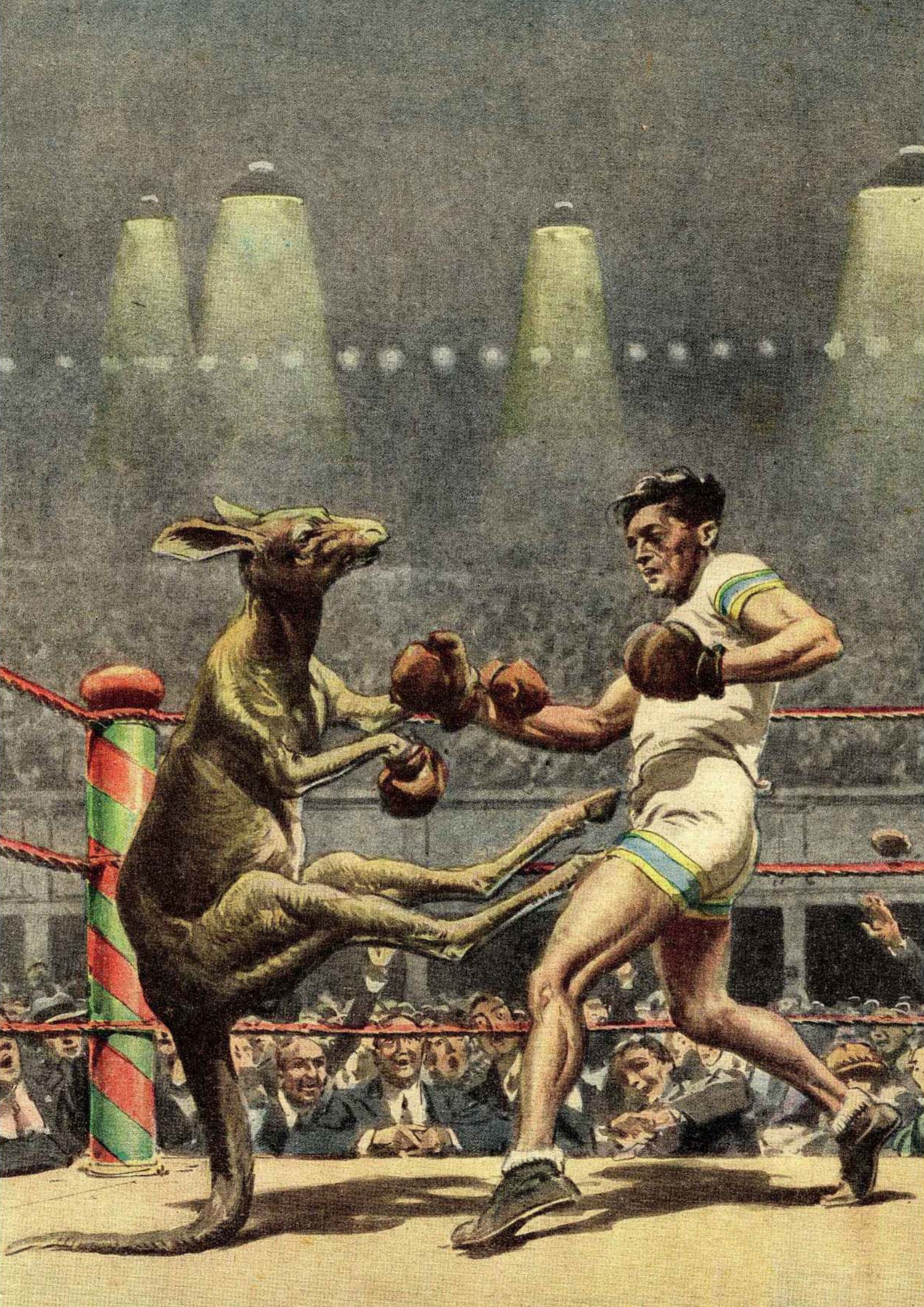


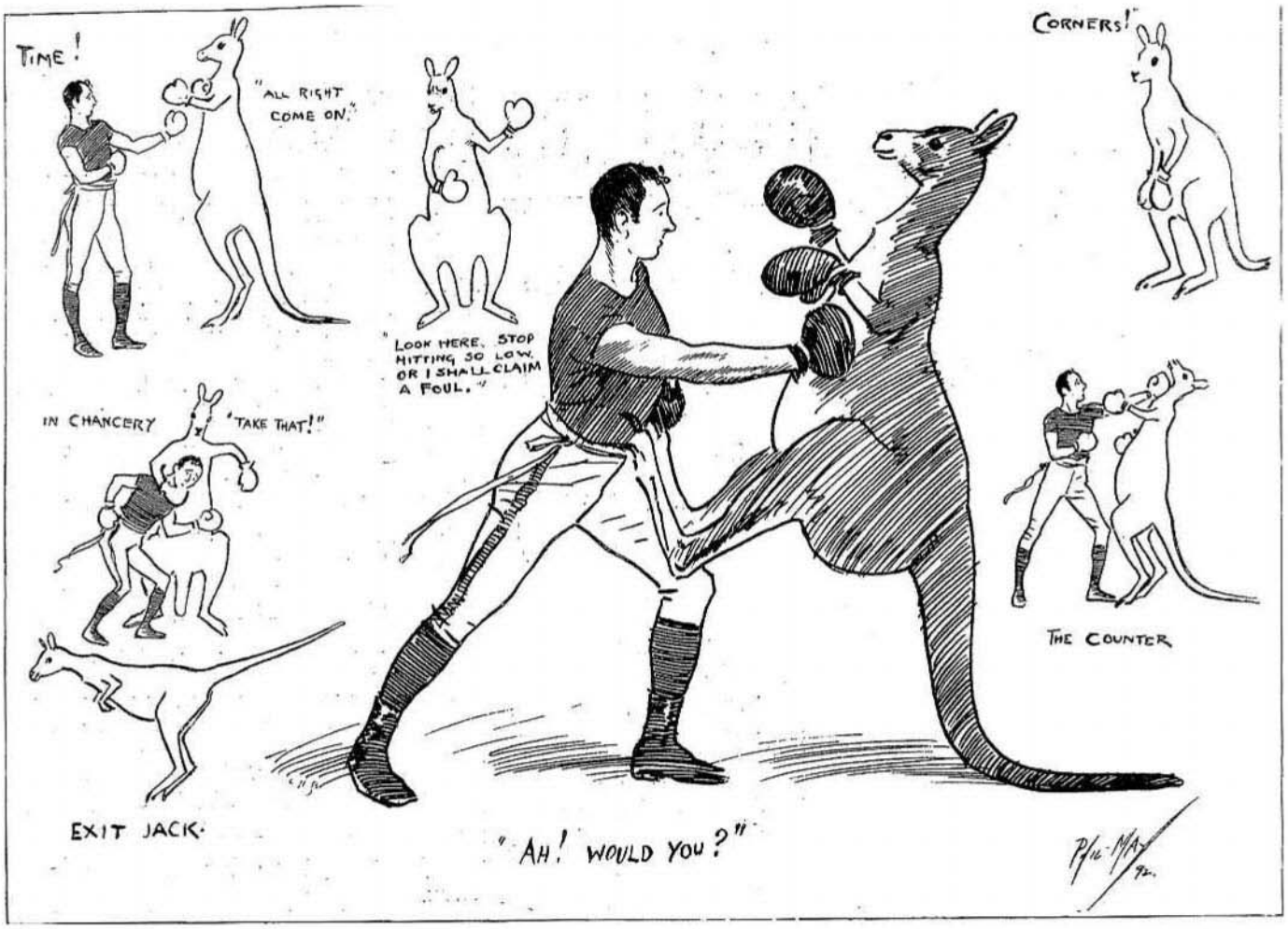
Landermann decided that Jack was ready to make his debut on stage

LEFT: Jack performing with Landermann in Australia, from Melbourne *Punch* magazine. **FACING PAGE:** Lindsay Fabre and his kangaroo 'Billy' boxing in London, from the *Domenica del Corriere*, 26 May 1929.

JACK THE CONQUEROR

Nothing even remotely like this extraordinary boxing kangaroo had ever been seen in Australia, and Jack entered Melbourne and Sydney like a conqueror. He commanded higher wages than any other performing animal on the Australian stage. In Sydney, Jack appeared as a guest star in the play *Evangeline*, acted to a crowded house: a character called the Lone Fisherman challenged the boxing kangaroo to a duel, but only to be soundly trounced by the animal. When Jack boxed at the Criterion Theatre in Sydney, one of the spectators was the celebrated French actress Sarah Bernhardt, who was so taken with the kangaroo's performance that she offered Landermann £1,000 to purchase it. It is not known what use she planned to make of this singular Antipodean performer; although both of her legs were intact at this time, she would surely not have been capable of boxing with Jack on stage. 'Professor' Landermann, as he henceforth called himself, carried on touring with his kangaroo, visiting Brisbane, Newcastle and Wallsend. In the last-





ABOVE: The original boxing kangaroo in London, from *Graphic* 26 November 1892. **BELOW:** Dick Landermann and his boxing kangaroo, from *Chums* 25 April 1894.

mentioned town, Jack died unexpectedly in August 1891. The Professor accused the promoters of the show of poisoning the valuable animal, but a competent veterinarian declared that Jack had in fact died from influenza.

But the canny Professor had been hedging his bets: after Jack had become a success in Australian show business, he had made sure he had another trained kangaroo in readiness, just in case the original performer should meet with some unexpected mishap. Jack II made his debut in late 1891, and carried on boxing on the Australian stage well into the following year. In the late summer of 1892, Landermann received an offer from the director of the Royal Aquarium in London for Jack to start an international show business career. The overjoyed Professor accepted this offer with alacrity – he had every confidence in his animal's ability, and competing boxing kangaroos were already starting to appear on the Australian stage. Landermann thought it suitable that Jack should have a 'wife' for company when he went to London, and he bought a tame 18-month-old female kangaroo before leaving Australia, bringing both animals with him on the *Ormuz* steamship. Off Colombo, the two foolhardy marsupials escaped from the cage they had

shared, and bounded overboard, falling headlong into the ocean. Landermann and his helpers lowered a boat and managed to rescue Jack, although the boxing kangaroo's wife unfortunately perished in the waves. For many weeks, Jack pined for his companion, Landermann assures us, and the Professor decided to sleep in the kangaroo cage himself, not leaving the mourning marsupial alone for a moment, lest the broken-hearted animal should seek self-destruction in the sea in an attempt to join his drowned companion.

"THE BOXING KANGAROO HAS ARRIVED..."

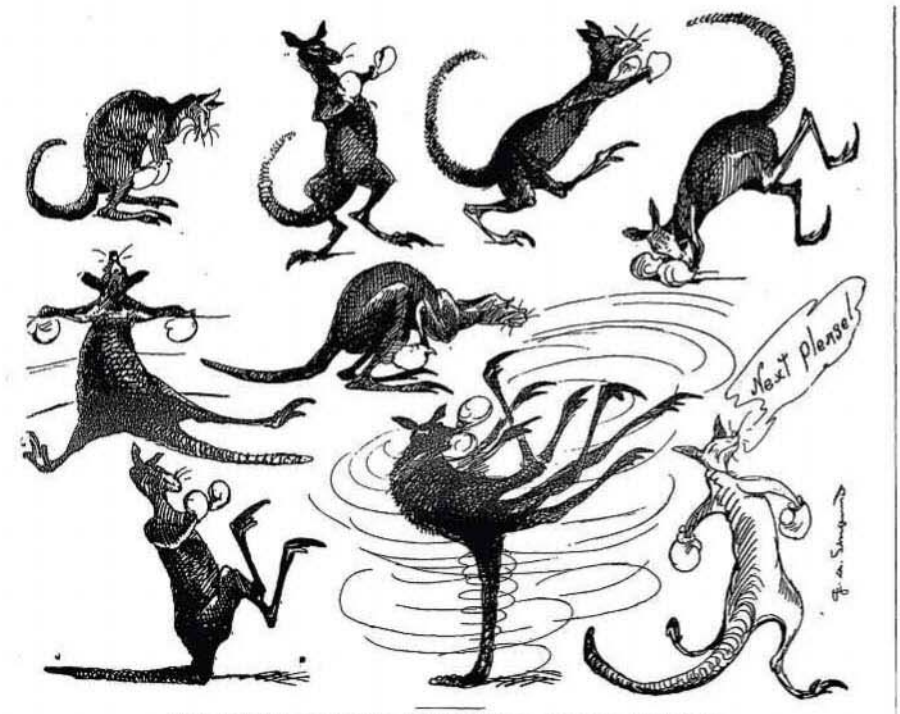
Jack recovered from his grief and was again able to concentrate on his pugilistic career. After recovering from sea-sickness, he was introduced to the London press in November 1892. The *Daily News* summed it up: "The Boxing Kangaroo has arrived. Having escaped purchase by Madame Bernhardt in Sydney, drowning at Colombo, and death from grief at the loss of his wife, he is at the Westminster Aquarium, challenging the world to box." Before a large and enthusiastic audience, Jack fought six rounds with his trainer to considerable acclaim: "In the fourth round he grasped the professor's gloves and only let go on the call of 'Time!' The fifth and sixth rounds he finished by clasping his opponent round the neck and throwing him to the ground. At the close the professor was in a profuse perspiration, but neither he nor the kangaroo was hurt. There is nothing cruel

about the exhibition and a very great deal that is interesting. It is amusing and novel. It is a singular illustration of the power of training; and it affords an opportunity such as no menagerie can give for a lesson in natural history."

Dick Landermann told the journalists about his background in the Australian bush, his experience with kangaroos from an early age, and his proficiency as a teacher of marsupial pugilism. The boxing kangaroo was a great novelty in London, where its like had never been seen before. Many people perceived kangaroos as wild and primitive creatures living in faraway lands, and they queued up to see one that was tame enough to box a human being with aplomb. The Royal Aquarium had made one of its best business deals ever, since the stands were constantly filled with people who wanted to see this wonderful kangaroo. The daily newspapers described Jack's bouts with great enthusiasm, and the 'funny' weeklies celebrated the boxing kangaroo in caricature form. Since there was talk that a wrestling lion would be performing in London, *Moonshine* magazine wrote that: "'No vacuum' is an universal law. The women having taken the men's place, the animals are now filling the void. The 'Boxing Kangaroo' is succeeded by the 'Wrestling Lion.' We may shortly expect to hear of the 'Rowing Rhinoceros,' the 'Crocodile Cricketer,' and the 'Buffalo Bicyclist.'"

In 1893, the fascination with boxing kangaroos was rampant in Britain, and since Professor Landermann and Jack had steady employment at the Royal Aquarium, the provincial market was ripe for exploitation by a rival. In February 1893, the boxing kangaroo 'Clifton' made his debut in the ring at the People's Palace in Dundee, before going on tour to Birmingham and the Channel Islands. Jack also went on tour later in 1903, but he was back at the Aquarium in March 1894, when the *Standard* newspaper wrote that: "Landermann, the trainer of the boxing kangaroo, engaged in several rounds with his docile pupil, and received with apparent good humour the hard knocks, and occasionally harder kicks, of that intelligent animal." The following month, *Chums* magazine published a feature on Jack and his trainer. Professor Landermann claimed that Jack was the most intelligent animal he had ever encountered. The kangaroo had a perfect understanding of the rules of boxing, and never struck an opponent when he was down. The journalist was allowed to meet Jack, described as a tall and formidable-looking animal weighing 14 stone. The kangaroo was quiet and gentle, however, and took two biscuits from the journalist's hand, eating them with relish.

The boxing kangaroo continued his career at the Royal Aquarium throughout 1895, without varying his performances. Mr Ritchie, the manager of the Aquarium, had purchased a Himalayan bear, which he employed Dick Landermann to train to wrestle. The bear was a very fierce and



THE BOXING KANGAROO.—NOT SKETCHED AT THE AQUARIUM.

TOP: A caricature of the original boxing kangaroo, from *Moonshine*, 3 December 1892.
LEFT: A poster for a boxing kangaroo at the Folies Bergère music hall in Paris.

Jack was the most intelligent animal Landermann had ever encountered

morose animal, however, and immune even to the Professor's skills as an animal educator; the experiment had to be discontinued after the bear escaped from its cage and mauled one of the theatre sweepers, rendering him an invalid for life.

In December 1895, the *Era* newspaper wrote that: "The Boxing Kangaroo, once the talk of London, and still an old favourite," did three rounds with Professor Landermann before retiring to its cage. In February 1896, the newspapers briefly noticed that Jack, the once-famous boxing kangaroo, had died from undisclosed causes. Mr Ritchie had insured the kangaroo for £2,000, and the insurers grudgingly paid up. Jack's hide was stuffed after death, and he was exhibited at the Royal Aquarium until sold by auction in 1903. Where are his stuffed remains today?

Professor Landermann continued his career as an animal educator as well as he could. Mr Ritchie purchased a small black pony from Cornwall and instructed Landermann to train it to box. Prince, the Boxing Pony, was proficient enough to appear on stage at the Royal Aquarium and to continue his show business career at least until 1899. Landermann was once taken to court, after the pony had misinterpreted the antics of a man waving his hands about as an invitation to box, but since the man had not been badly hurt by the pony's kicks, the Professor won his case. In 1898, Landermann had another boxing kangaroo, which he toured with until 1902, ending up at a small circus in Grimsby. In March 1903, the boxing kangaroo's Svengali died at his Bethnal Green lodgings, aged just 40, from acute pneumonia according to his death certificate; he was quite forgotten by

this time, and no newspaper published his obituary or even announced his untimely death.

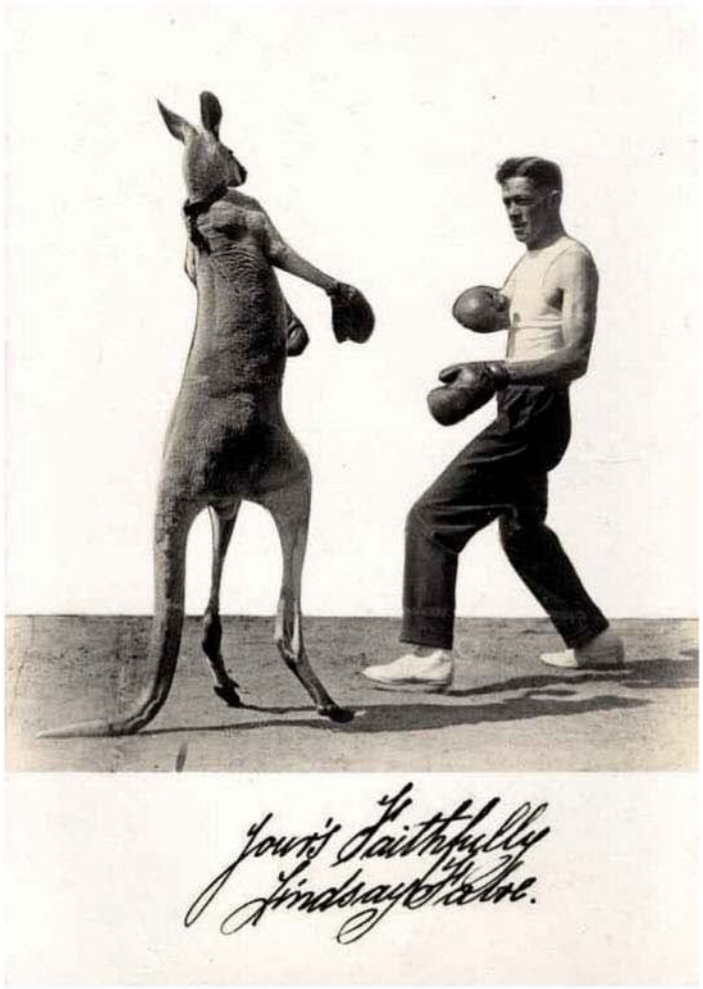
THE CRAZE SPREADS

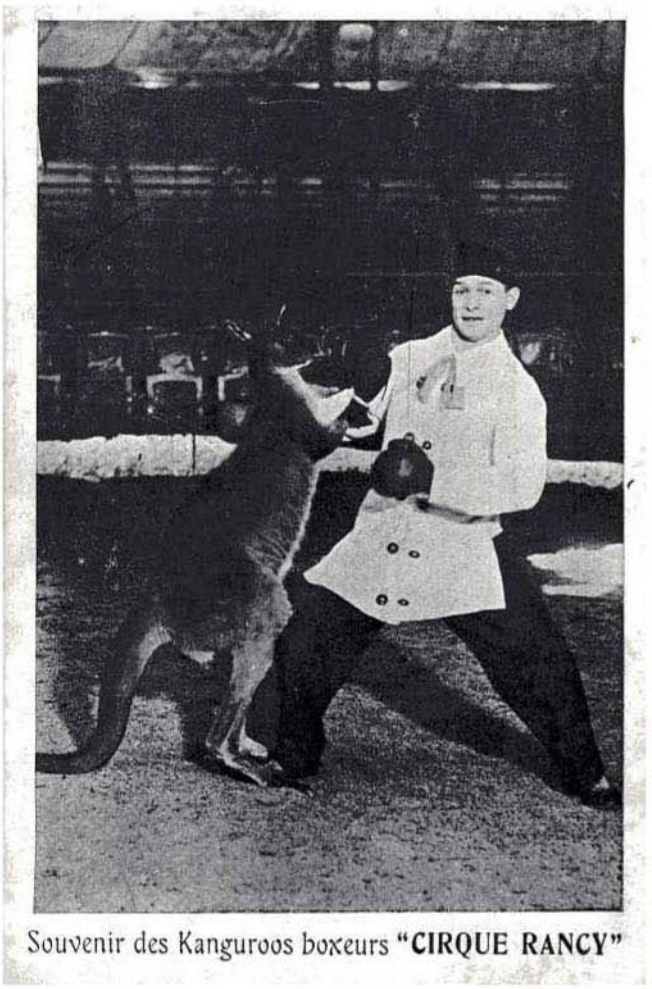
In the 1890s, boxing kangaroos were all the rage throughout the civilised world. In France, 'Les Kangourous Boxeurs' were considered *très chic*, and they infested the music halls all over Paris. In Germany, there was an early silent film entitled *Das Boxende Känguruh*, directed by Max Skladanowsky in 1895. In the United States, the enthusiasm for marsupial pugilism exceeded all precedents: there was wholesale importation of kangaroos from Australia to undergo rudimentary boxing education before being put on show. The less fastidious transatlantic music halls, who could not get their hands on a real boxing kangaroo, employed a clown in a kangaroo suit instead.

The second boxing kangaroo to achieve fame and fortune in Britain first bounded into the limelight in March 1925. When Bostock & Wombwell's Great Jungle visited Stafford at Bebbington's Ground, the newspaper advertisements pointed out that "The wonderful Boxing Kangaroo, 'Dempsey', will appear at each performance." Along with Bonzo, "the limit in animal intelligence, the greatest of all performing Sea Lions", Dempsey was the star of the show during Bostock & Wombwell's lengthy provincial tours. There were murmurs from those concerned about animal cruelty, but the kangaroo trainer pointed out that his charge was well fed and happy. Dempsey willingly took part in the performances, sparring with his forepaws and sometimes delivering some punishing blows with his powerful rear legs. The trainer took care not to hurt the kangaroo, and merely tapped his boxing gloves against the animal's muscular chest. A picture postcard shows Dempsey as a large, formidable-looking kangaroo, a good deal taller than his trainer.

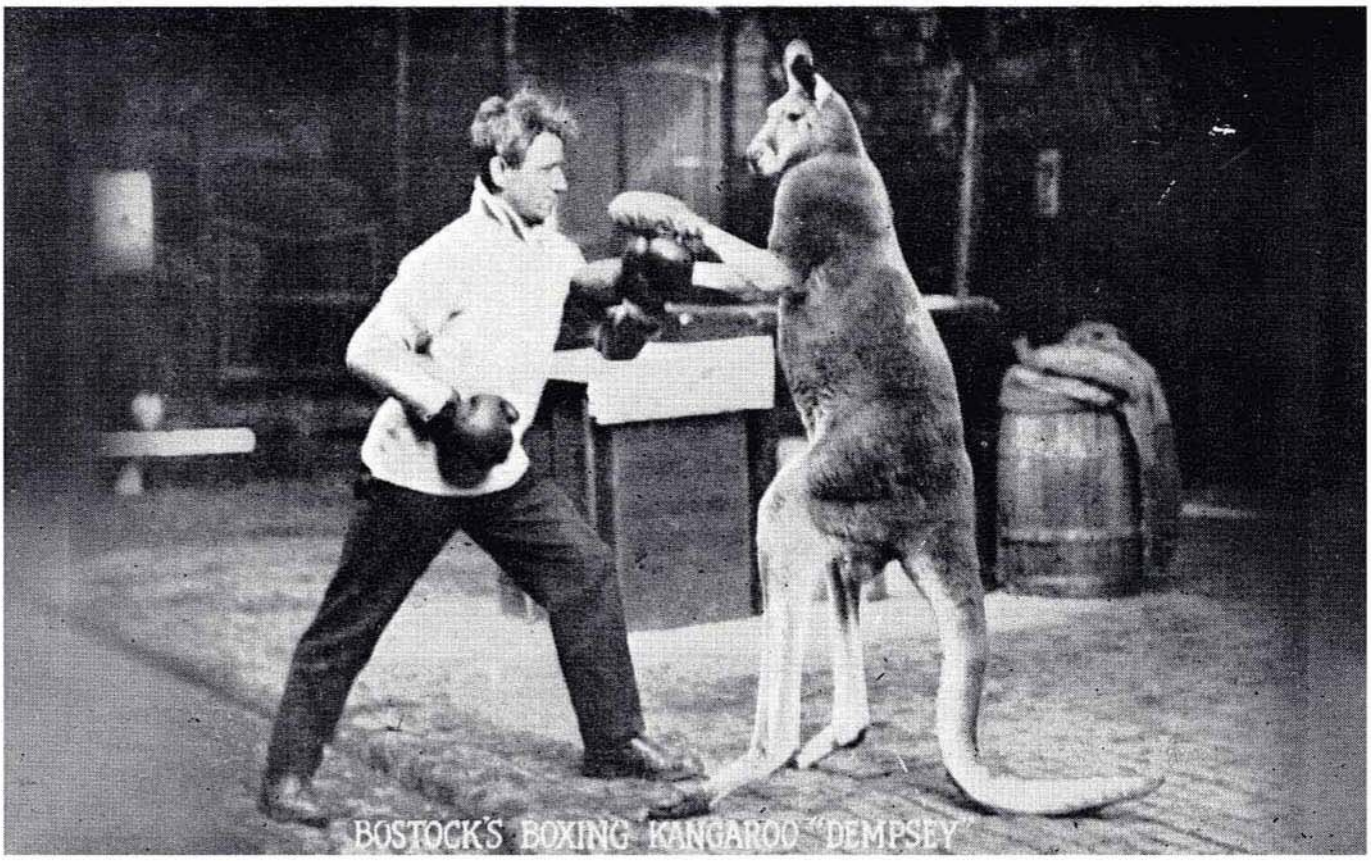
In January 1928, Bostock & Wombwell's circus came to Belfast, where Dempsey was a great favourite. The boxing kangaroo was reported to be in good cheer, sparring away with enthusiasm during the shows. Then came the stark and tragic news that Dempsey had expired quickly and unexpectedly from double-sided pneumonia. After falling ill, the kangaroo had been taken to the animal hospital in Glengormley, where he was put in a padded box supplied with warmth from a stove. The veterinarian Captain Gregg and his assistant did their utmost to save Dempsey's life, but the boxing kangaroo died on 4 February. The circus was in mourning for this veteran performer with four years in the ring and said to be worth £1,000. He was to be replaced with another kangaroo imported from Paris, but this performer never achieved much of note and not even its name has been recorded.

The Flashback Internet forum in Sweden has added a curious mystification, claiming that Dempsey's true cause of death was covered up in a conspiracy to claim the insurance money. Allegedly, a wealthy Swede resident in Belfast had visited an afternoon performance of Bostock & Wombwell's circus. With him was a relation, a Swedish peasant from the province of Småland, who had never before travelled abroad. When Dempsey was boxing away with his trainer, the latter pretended to be knocked over by the kangaroo's blows. As a joke, he offered the Swedish peasant the opportunity to box with the animal. The simple-minded Swede, who had never seen a kangaroo before, perceived Dempsey as a very dangerous opponent. He dealt the kangaroo a resounding blow on the head, knocking Dempsey out cold. The boxing kangaroo was taken to the animal hospital





ABOVE: A postcard of Australian kangaroo trainer Lindsay Fabre boxing with 'Aussie' during his UK tour of 1930-1931. **ABOVE:** A boxing kangaroo at the Cirque Rancy.



ABOVE: A postcard showing Bostock's boxing kangaroo 'Dempsey'. **BELOW:** A boxing kangaroo at the Dublin zoological gardens, probably in the 1920s or 1930s.

in a state of unconsciousness, and there were fears that he had been killed outright; the stricken animal seemed to recover for a while, but pneumonia set in and the valuable kangaroo perished miserably. There is nothing in the contemporary newspapers about Dempsey being knocked unconscious, however; nor is it stated that the kangaroo was insured. It should be said that the Flashback forum abounds with trolls and mythomaniacs, and as a general rule, anonymous Internet writers should not be relied upon.

THE END OF THE SHOW

Although they had long since lost their novelty appeal, a number of boxing kangaroos remained active throughout the 1920s and 1930s. London Zoo had 'Digger', who followed his trainer like a dog, and boxed him with considerable skill until the kangaroo expired during a cold snap in February 1930. 'Aussie' was active from 1930 to at least 1932, boxing in provincial music halls. Not even another world war was enough to put a definitive end to the enthusiasm for boxing kangaroos among easily amused provincial audiences. Robert Bros. Mammoth Circus, which toured

Britain extensively in the post-war years, had a boxing kangaroo named 'Sidney', active from 1952 until 1959. In 1977, this circus had two boxing kangaroos named 'Sidney' and 'Skippy', but the clock was ticking away for the few remaining marsupial pugilists. Even the most unsophisticated country people were beginning to think boxing kangaroos pointless and unedifying, and animal protectionists rightly pointed out that kangaroos belonged in the Australian wilderness, not in a circus ring. The craze for boxing kangaroos, which had begun in the early 1890s, has now come to a definitive end, with a whimper rather than a bang; few modern people miss the poor marsupials being exploited, and in spite of its emblematic significance for Australian sportsmen and sportswomen, the boxing kangaroo has finally passed from the realm of archaic popular entertainment to a state of cryptozoological oblivion.

JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to FT and the author of numerous books, including *Murder Houses of London* (2014) and *Strange Victoriana* (2016). His latest book is *The Ripper of Waterloo Road* (2017).

The Mystery Lights of Suffolk

MATT SALUSBURY pursues the will-o-the-wisps that have long haunted the East Anglian coast and learns of a possible geological explanation for "Jenny Burnt Arses"

The East Anglian coast – coastal Suffolk in particular, but also north Essex and Norfolk – are especially rich in mystery light phenomena.

These lights, traditionally assumed to be alive or at least directed by some malign intelligence, were known variously across the region as hob-o-lanterns, hobby lanterns, lantern-men, will-o-the-wisps, Jack-o-lanterns, Jenny Burnt Arses, Joan the Wad, Spunkie, Pinket or corpse candles.

They all delighted in leading travellers astray at night, particularly in marshes or churchyards. To be 'well-led' in Suffolk dialect was to become beguiled by hobby lanterns into dangerous terrain and left in a confused state. A Ms Tish Spall from the Suffolk village of Westleton told her local Women's Institute, she'd been the victim of such an incident in nearby Westleton Walks one night some time before 1922, when hobby lanterns had led her over a mile away from the path.[1]

They were known as hobby lanterns, will-o-the-wisps or corpse candles

In some hobby lantern traditions, these glowing entities were the souls of unbaptised children, or of the drowned. Some could disguise themselves as beautiful girls. On the Slaughden peninsula near the Suffolk fishing port of Aldeburgh, there were said to be lights associated with nameless "things" that pelted you with shingle. Some advised that if you lay down and held your breath, it would make the hobby lanterns go away.

ABOVE: The churchyard at Burgh St Peter, where the mystery lights are known as the Devil's Flashes. **BELOW:** James Wentworth Day, hunting East Anglian oddities.

Others advised that on no account should you whistle at the hobby lanterns; to do so would spell your doom.

MARSH GAS AND LUMINOUS OWLS

The standard modern explanation for will-o-the-wisps is that they were just misidentified jets of ignited marsh gas – methane. James Wentworth Day reported that these mystery lights were once so common in Syleham, right on the Suffolk bank of the River Waveney on the border with Norfolk, that the phenomenon was known as Syleham Lights. Wentworth Day added these were most probably self-igniting plumes of marsh gas, and after the Syleham Marshes were drained, these were much diminished.

There's a similarly logical explanation offered for the "devils" with whom the seventh century East Anglian Saxon missionary St Botolph fought magical duels before driving them out of Iken, the spot on the Alde Estuary not far from Aldeburgh where he established a monastery. The explanation goes that the devils were just plumes of marsh gas, and by having the marshes drained, St Botolph cast them out. (That's if the whole episode actually happened in Iken, and not somewhere near Lincoln, as some scholars claim.)

A bizarre explanation for hobby lanterns appeared to take hold in Norfolk in the 1890s, when contemporary naturalists such

as RJW Purdey suggested that a series of mystery lights seen across the county were in fact luminous barn owls which had picked up a dusting of phosphorescent fungus after roosting in trees scattered with fungal spores. Charles Fort, in his book *Lo!*, was especially dismissive of this "luminous owls of Norfolk" hypothesis, pointing out its numerous flaws. [2]

Then there are the "corpse candles", glowing lights associated with churchyards and assumed to be the souls of the dead, while East Anglia's Black Shuck – the phantom black dog with glowing red eyes – is also known as "the Churchyard Beast", particularly within the county of Suffolk. (Meanwhile the Shuck in Hatfield Peverell, Essex, had a tendency to explode). The churchyard at Burgh St Peter, in the southern end of Norfolk near the River Waveney, has a history of anomalous churchyard mystery lights known as the Devil's Flashes.

Another candidate for East Anglia's lantern men and hobby lanterns is some sort of St Elmo's fire phenomenon. The blue glow of the luminous plasma that is St Elmo's fire, sometimes accompanied by a buzzing noise, is usually associated with pointy metal objects like weathervanes or ships' masts, but it's also been recorded during thunderstorms around cows' horns, and even on leaves and grass.

Many of these out-of-way places behind the coast where mystery lights were seen

MATT SALUSBURY

ABOVE: The obsolete, top-secret, over-the-horizon-radar project Cobra Mist, surrounded by the Lantern Marshes at Orford Ness, now a National Trust nature reserve. The place name predates the nearby lighthouse, and could refer to mystery lights seen in the area.

were on smugglers' routes. At the industry's peak in the late 18th century, local smuggling syndicates such as the Hadleigh Gang and the Syzewell Gang could mobilise 200 men and 100 horses at short notice, and fight pitched gun battles with the Excisemen and the regiments of dragoons garrisoned locally to support them. It's scarcely surprising, then, that so many odd lights were reported signalling at night.

RENDLESHAM LIGHTS

The mother of all East Anglian mystery light incidents, the Rendlesham Forest Incident (RFI) of Boxing Day 1980, seemed to involve mystery lights bouncing around the forest floor and leading US Air Force security astray, complete with missing time experiences, in a manner more reminiscent of the mischievous hobby lanterns than currently fashionable explanations such as space aliens, multidimensional time travellers or some sort of nefarious Cold War disinformation cover story (see **FT204:32-39**).

Alan Murdie and Robert Halliday have already revealed in these pages how a Mr G Fell recalled an 1882 incident from his boyhood in Sudbourne (just north of Rendlesham and home to the Captain's Wood nature reserve). Fell describes encountering hobby lanterns "on certain nights" in two local fields. "They look like a dull red light, like a lantern with the glass smoky. It moved to and fro across the field, about walking pace," he said. Whatever it was disappeared whenever Fell and his boyhood chums approached within 100 yards (30m), lighting

In 1999, a "green meteor" was seen heading towards Orford Ness

up again when they withdrew.[3]

As also noted by Murdie and Halliday, Sudbourne is just a few miles inland from Orford Ness, which is a narrow spit of shingle sticking out into the North Sea. Orford Ness starts at Slaughden, home of those nameless shingle-pelting "things". At this end of the Orford Ness peninsula are the Lantern Marshes.

Since then, mystery lights have seldom left Orford alone. In the 1970s, two men saw "a pair of lights" over the coast near Orford Castle. The lights were hovering quite close to the water, and these darted away at "an incredible speed" as they approached. More recently, in the autumn of 1999, a "green meteor" was seen in the night sky heading towards Orford Ness. A strange hum has also been reported in recent times on the Ness.[4]

There's also a Lampland Marshes marked on today's large-scale maps immediately south of the old Suffolk fishing village at Walberswick. There were said to be jack-o-lanterns in Eastbridge (now on the edge of the Minsmere RSPB reserve, to the south and a little inland) and at nearby Dunwich Walks, appearing in winter. There are stories of fairy lights, ghosts and weirdness around the church at Martlesham, near Martlesham Creek on the Deben estuary near Woodbridge.

YOUNG STRATA

One of the problems with the "ignited marsh gas" explanation is that by no means all of the local mystery lights are anywhere near a marsh. Recently I talked to retired geologist Bob Markham, formerly of Ipswich Museum, who came up with another perfectly logical explanation for East Anglia's abundance of mystery lights, although a nicely left-field one. It's the geology.

Bob told me that the mystery lights seen so often in East Anglia are possibly something to do with the strata round there being "of recent age", so recent in fact that there is still decaying plant and animal material in it, including phosphorous, which breaks down into – among other substances – phosphine gas.[5]

Phosphine (PH_3, also known as phosphane) rises through the strata and ignites on contact with other gases, including oxygen. Bob says there's also some tectonic activity underground, which produces energy that can ignite phosphine plumes. He noted that glowing lights were observed during the Great English Earthquake in Colchester, north Essex, in 1884 (see "Unusual Finds in Parish Registers" by Helen Barrell, **FT354:40-44**). I've encountered inexplicably glowing patches of ground in Dunwich Forest at night,

which may be something to do with this process.

Compared to the rest of the British Isles, the East Anglian coast does have some very young strata indeed, some of the youngest strata on these islands, in fact. There's no stretch of the East Anglian shore that's over three or four million years old. The Red Crag formation, a uniquely East Anglian phenomenon, is a phosphorous-rich mix of sand and broken seashells dates from around that era. Also from that epoch is the Corraline Crag limestone formation, a type of limestone, which is found only in coastal Suffolk and nowhere else in the whole world.

Much of the heavily eroding clay cliffs of north Suffolk were laid down between 1.8 million years ago and 450,000 years ago (a period known locally by a wonderful name – the 'Ipswichian Interglacial'.) These include the younger 'glacial clay' left by a receding Ice Age. The cliffs at Lowestoft (north Suffolk) are a mere 150,000 years old. Much of East Anglia's North Sea coast was laid down in the Devensian glacial period, also known as the last glacial period, the most recent Ice Age, which ended only 16,000 years ago – the mere twinkling of an eye geologically speaking. [6]

Some of the East Anglian coastal strata are younger still – the peat deposits at Slaughden (now underwater) are a piddling 8,500 years old, the soil in the shingle spit at Orford Ness started developing just 7,000 years ago, and receding seas at nearby Aldeburgh left behind land that's only of a 3,000-year-old vintage. There are plenty of sites where the land is so young that there's still an abundance of animal and vegetable matter decomposing down there, percolating up to the surface as inflammable phosphine gas. It's noteworthy that some of the geologically more recent sites in the above list – Slaughden, Orford Ness – have a rich tradition of mystery lights.

As for the churchyard corpse candle phenomenon, Markham's somewhat grisly explanation is even more straightforward. There's a lot of decomposition still in progress in churchyards. As the bodies of the not-so-recent dead break down, phosphine gas rises to the surface: so what we're seeing with anomalous churchyard lights is not the souls of the dead moving around at night it's actually the gas released from their bodies, long after "dust to dust, ashes to ashes". Yuck!

MATT SALUSBURY

WHITE LIGHT, BLACK DOGS

Case closed on the mystery lights of the east of England, then? Er, no. There's a whole bunch of local mystery lights that can't be explained by phosphine gas plumes. There are several accounts of lights that bounce along the beaches and appear to react to people, or even fire "laser beams" (as did the mystery light of the Rendlesham Forest Incident.) FT's own Jenny Randles has documented how in 1975 a glowing light came out of the sea at Sizewell and partially paralysed postman Thomas Meyer, who was walking with his dog. Randles speculated that some kind of not-yet-understood "meteorological tsunami" was at work. [7]

Nor do marsh gas and St Elmo's fire account for the tendency of Suffolk's will-o-the-wisps and hobby lanterns to move in zigzagging figures of eight, or for the characteristic of the invisible lantern men to not only lead you astray with their phantom lights, but also to dash a traveller's own lantern out of his hand and "burst it all to pieces". The Slaughden shingle-throwing "things", whatever they were, had snatched the lantern from the hands of a shepherd on at least one occasion. Lamp-snatching hobby lanterns – who led you off the path after extinguishing your own lamp – were said to be at large around Dunwich too up until around 1924.

A contributor to the Paranormal Database website described an encounter from January 2010, on the path from Hollesley – it's stuck out on a Suffolk peninsula, so out of

AMANDA SLATER / FLICKR / CREATIVE COMMONS

TOP: The Red Crag is a uniquely East Anglian phosphorous-rich stratum of red sand mixed with broken seashells, between 2 and 4 million years old, making it some of the oldest strata locally. **ABOVE:** The remote area of Shingle Street at the mouth of Orford Ness.

THE FELIXSTOWE FIRE DEMON

Evening Star

Ipswich, Tuesday September 21, 1965 No. 24,437 Price 4d.

Felixstowe Glowing Object Mystery

Another east of England mystery light incident that definitely doesn't fit the marsh gas or phosphine gas explanation is what the front-page headline of Ipswich's *Evening Star* of 21 September 1965 described as the "FELIXSTOWE GLOWING OBJECT MYSTERY". Given the circus that's since grown up around the Rendlesham Forest Incident, it's surprising that the Felixstowe Glowing Object Mystery of over half a century ago has been almost completely forgotten, becoming as obscure as the East Anglian airship wave of 1909 (see **FT198:48-50**); although, just like Rendlesham, the mystery seems to have acquired some extra embellishment in the telling.

The "Glowing Object Mystery" involved three Felixstowe residents in their early 20s – lorry driver Geoffrey Maskey, his girlfriend Mavis Forsyth and Maskey's neighbour Michael Johnson. It was Maskey who was driving them all one night down Walton Avenue, then a fairly quiet road on the edge of town; this was just two years before the first container cranes were installed, starting Felixstowe's transformation into northern Europe's biggest container port, which it remains today. The "last street-lamp" on Walton Avenue, where they stopped for Johnson to get out, presumably for a quick wee in the nearby woods, is now right by the huge roundabout where container lorries leave the port for their onward journeys.

The Ipswich *Star* report opens by describing a "high-pitched humming noise… a great orange tinted object moved across the sky… a man staggered from a hedge and collapsed." The humming noise was heard by Maskey and Forsyth as they waited in the car for Johnson.

The sound was quickly followed by a "long oval object in the sky… a dull orange colour". The glow from it lit up most of Walton Avenue for about half a minute. It was then that Forsyth and Maskey realised their friend was still in the woods, and in a panic, they reversed the car back to look

Michael Johnson was "mumbling about a man in the flames getting him"

for him. At this point, Johnson emerged staggering from the bushes and collapsed. His friends noticed "a lump and marks on his neck," and he was "mumbling about a man in the flames getting him" before he lost consciousness, so they dragged him into the car and drove him to Felixstowe Hospital.

There, Johnson was diagnosed as suffering from "a severe shock" and transferred to the better-resourced Ipswich and East Suffolk Hospital. As the paper went to press, the hospital still wasn't letting visitors in to see him.

By the time the American Monsters website wrote it up in 2011, the "Glowing Object" had morphed into "The Felixstowe Fire Demon". Details had attached themselves to the story that weren't in the original *Evening Star* report. A normally dark night became one of "Stygian blackness"; Johnson suffered from amnesia and couldn't recognise his friends when he finally regained consciousness in hospital in the morning; additionally, he had acquired "unusual burns" on the back of his neck and a bruise above his ear.

The American Monsters account goes way beyond a "man in the flames trying to get him," becoming an "unseen force" that compelled Johnson to walk out of the car at Walton Avenue and head into the woods, where he encountered "a humanoid being" with "large sloping eyes that were glowing in the darkness." The creature was "engulfed by orange flames" and caused Johnson to black out.

Was there really a "man in the flames" that early autumn night on Felixstowe's Walton Avenue? While the "Glowing Object Mystery" seems to stray into UFO territory, it does have elements that are more in the local tradition of hobby lanterns than scary occupants of craft from outer space.

The humming sound that accompanied the event suggests some sort of electromagnetic phenomenon; as we saw above, buzzing sometime accompanies manifestations of St Elmo's Fire. And Johnson's confused, "mumbling" state could have been the result of some hitherto unexplained electromagnetic effect on his brain, triggering "severe shock" and possibly even delirium and hallucinations.

The Defence Intelligence Staff's later declassified report *Unidentified Aerial Phenomena in the UK Air Defence Region: Executive Summary* (2000, also known as Project Condign) concluded that the small proportion of UFOs that were not misidentifications were Unexplained Aerial Phenomena (UAP). The report stated that these were most likely some kind of unusual meteorological phenomenon not fully understood by modern science. It called these "Buoyant Plasma Formations," similar to ball lightning, capable of producing some kind of unexplained energy field or plasma. Possible causes for UAPs could include super-heated meteorites hitting the atmosphere and creating exotic plasmas from the gases there. These UAPs do sound awfully like a description of what happened over Walton Road, Felixstowe, on that September night in 1965.

In any event, the strange orange glow was back in the skies over Felixstowe on the hot summer night of 1 July 2006, when witnesses reported two "orange orbs" over Old Felixstowe and the skies to the north. A witness described these orbs as "moving extremely fast; they appeared to chase each other. The objects were watched for around 10 seconds before dropping behind the horizon, disappearing from view." [9]

ADRIAN CABLE / CREATIVE COMMONS

ABOVE: The Queen's Head at Blyford, Suffolk, where luminous balls of light were seen passing through the walls.

the way it's the location of an open prison – leading to the equally remote Shingle Street beach nearby. She watched with her partner as a greenish glowing ball of light danced around the path and the marsh behind the beach. The following month, also at Hollesley, a local woman reported seeing two mystery lights while sitting on top of an old World War II pillbox on a still, cold, misty night: "The light began moving in spurts of quick arches" and "slow figures of eight"; it "bobbed back and forth" and resembled "those lightning/plasma balls you get in novelty shops."

Other local mystery lights clearly outside the capabilities of ignited plumes of phosphine gas sound more like something from the realms of ball lightning. These include the luminous balls of light seen passing through walls of the Queen's Head pub at Blyford. Blyford is near Blythburgh, Suffolk, whose church was the site of a visitation by the "Devil in dog form" back in 1577. Blythburgh's black dog, which also appeared further north in the town of Bungay earlier the same day, appeared during a "tempest", careered around the church and left three parishioners dead from being "blasted" or from strange burns, also suggestive of some type of ball lightning phenomena (see "A Straunge and Terrible Wunder" by Clare Stubbs, **FT195:3035**).

The Blyford glowing light that was seen floating around the Queen's Head in 1969 was pursued by a group of people, with some accounts describing these lights disappearing into a wardrobe, observed by the landlady but not the landlord. (No one had heard of any such incident when I visited the Queen's Head earlier this year.) A fitter in the kitchen of the Bird's Eye fish finger factory at the bottom of Rant Score, Lowestoft, a steep alley descending from the High Street to the Suffolk port's harbour, felt a touch on his shoulder when working there in 1970 and saw that it was caused by a floating, glowing blue ball that then passed through a wall. [8] A friend, who lives in Oakley, on the Norfolk border near Diss, and a long way inland, told me he'd seen something like ball lightning travelling along the Waveney River there.

I've even experienced strange, anomalous lightning flashes on the Suffolk coast myself, walking at night in Dunwich Forest. Something lit up a clear, cloudless night sky with white light. I assumed it was lightning far out over the North Sea, somehow refracted through invisibly distant clouds or reflected by the water. Except that my friend in Oakley told me he'd experienced exactly the same thing, only many miles inland. My girlfriend and the taxi driver who was driving her towards the coast from Darsham Station (it's on the main road, about four miles [6.4km] inland from Dunwich) one night a few years back also saw *red* lightning, a rare but recognised phenomenon, also known as a sprite.

MATT SALUSBURY is a freelance journalist and regular *Fortean Times* contributor based in Suffolk. His book *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: Suffolk* is out soon from CFZ Publishing (www.twitter.com/mysteryanimals).

NOTES

1 Tish Spall testimony from *Westleton – Customs and Sayings recorded by the Women's Institute in 1922*, Leiston Press, Leiston, 2008.

2 Dr David W Clarke, "The Luminous Owls of Norfolk", *Fortean Studies* vol. 1, John Brown Publishing, London, 1994. He quotes Charles Fort, *Lo!,* 1931, online at www.resologist.net/loei.htm. Syleham Lights from James Wentworth Day, *Here are Ghosts and Witches*, Batsford, London 1954.

3 "Weather Phenomenon and Elements – The Fire of St Elmo", The Weather Doctor website, www.islandnet.com/~see/weather/elements/stelmo.htm; Alan Murdie and Robert Halliday, "Magic Lanterns," **FT304:40-42**, Dec 2005, which quotes *East Anglian Miscellany* 1933-43.

4 http://paranormaldatabase.com.

5 Telephone interview with Bob Markham, 5 Apr 2017.

6 Tim Holt-Wilson, *Two Million Years on the Suffolk Coast,* Touching the Tide Landscape Partnership Scheme, 2014.

7 Jenny Randles, "UFO Casebook: My Dog Saw a UFO", **FT 280:31**, Oct 2011.

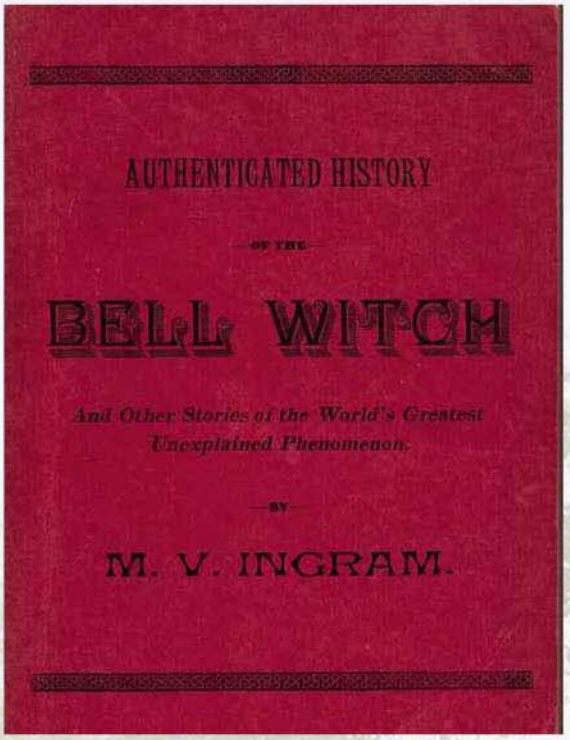
8 Blyford and Rant Score, Lowestoft glowing orbs from http://paranormaldatabase.com.

9 "Felixstowe Glowing Object Mystery", *Evening Star*, Ipswich, 21 Sept 1965; "Felixstowe Fire Demon: (England)", American Monsters, www.americanmonsters.com/site/2011/10/felixstowe-fire-demon-england/; Condign Report, www.disclosureproject.org/docs/pdf/uap_exec_summary_dec00.pdf.

The Bell Witch, Part Two:
An American Haunting

If there's one piece of supernatural lore that everyone in the US has heard of, then it's probably Tennessee's celebrated 'Bell Witch', but its main legacy is a fictional one. **ROGER CLARKE** goes in search of the dark roots and cinematic descendents of this foundational American haunting.

The first really extensive account of the Bell Witch was published in 1894. It's sometimes known as 'The Red Book'. The full title will give you some flavour of the thing: *The Authenticated History of the Famous Bell Witch, The Wonder of the 19th Century and Unexplained Phenomenon of the Christian Era: The Mysterious Talking Goblin that Terrorized the West End of Robertson County, Tennessee, Tormenting John Bell to his Death; the story of Betsy Bell, her lover and the haunting sphinx.*



It was put together by newspaperman Martin Van Buren Ingram who claimed the bulk of his book was based on a private diary written by a member of the Bell family, who was very young when the events took place. This diary, it is said, was written in 1846 – the year the Liberty Bell broke in Pennsylvania. The original diary has never been produced. Its existence is doubtful. Ingram claimed the *Saturday Evening Post* had published a lengthy account of the case in 1849, but many have researched it and found the article is simply not there.

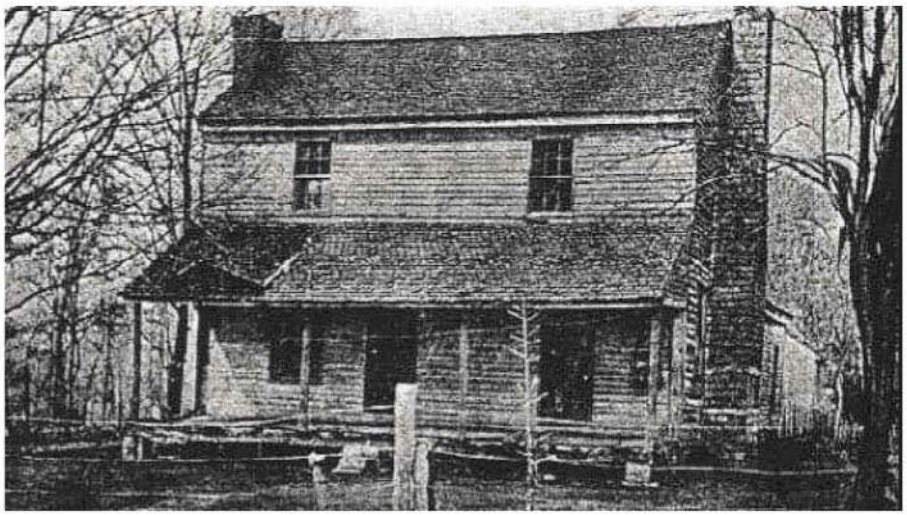
Though recent archival discoveries have added weight to the evidence that something did indeed happen at Adams Station, the Bell Witch was designated an entirely folkloric construction as far back as the 1930s, when it was discussed in *The Journal of American Folklore* (Hudson and McCarter, 1934).

Many believers were on the look-out for the supernatural

Recent textual studies have shown that the supposed diary of Richard Williams Bell is almost certainly a fabrication by Ingram, [1] but unfortunately many of his new and fabricated details are now imbedded into the accepted narrative of the story. Even the tale's contemporary local curator Pat Fitzhugh has doubts about a further source, believing that the John Bell Jr account published by grandson Charles Bailey Bell in 1934 – the last of the great revelations on the case – is also a hoax.

There's another poltergeist case that Ingram mentions in his book, which is clearly a further source for his invention – the Epworth poltergeist of England. This case took place in 1716 in the county of Lincolnshire in the household of a clergyman; amongst his sons was a man with a great destiny, John Wesley. Wesley, though he did not experience the poltergeist himself, being away at school at the time, went on to found the Methodist Church. Again, there was the presence of supernatural animals – identified as possibly a badger or a rabbit. Again, the agent seemed to be one of the girls, and there was the sense of a godly family under siege of terrifying noises and effects, which responded, amongst other things, to family evening prayers; a detail that could have come straight from the Bell Witch, who repeated sermons, hymns and prayers. Early followers of Methodism were struck by their founder's strong belief in ghosts and for a while many believers were on the look-out for the supernatural – initiating the set of circumstances

3C 45
PORT ROYAL
One mile N. at confluence of Red
River and Sulphur Fork Creek, is
Port Royal, early center of com-
merce and manufacture. It was
settled in 1784 and nearby was held
the first court in Tennessee County,
C., established in 1788. The Red
iver Baptist Church was organized
ere in 1791. A covered bridge,
ected in 1903, spans the Red
ver here.
TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION



leading to the Cock Lane ghost of 1762 (see **FT150:30-33, 334:36-41**).

All Ingrams would have needed to concoct the Red Book was some literature on John Wesley and an edition of Joseph Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus* (see **FT357:44-50**), a book much admired by America's own witch-hunter Cotton Mather. There are two cases in this book which seem to inform the Bell Witch narrative – the Devil of Macon and the Drummer of Tedworth, the latter personally investigated by Glanvill. The detail about the Bell Witch's slave-girl Phyllis being seized and paralysed by an invisible force, legs locked behind her head, is more or less what happened to Glanvill's horse when he went to investigate the Drummer of Tedworth – he came down one morning to find it paralysed with its foot rammed into its mouth. At Tedworth, too, there were bangings outside of the building and lights moving round in the vicinity, the patriarch being eaten out of house and home by gawping visitors. At Tedworth there is a single stark and telling vocalisation – the sound of someone shouting "*A Witch, A Witch*!". Was this the hazelnut that grew into the Bell Witch tree?

There is a mysterious animal-spirit seen in a bedroom. At Tedworth, a boy in the household is physically hurt by a spirit-propelled knife, much as Betsy is injured by invisible hands. An open penknife is mentioned in the Nashville Archive Document, as is another detail from Tedworth which has strayed into Tennessee, a visitation noise that begins on the roof of the haunted building. Blankets are pulled from sleeping children in both stories.

The vocalisations, which are so peculiar to the Bell Witch story, are rare but not without precedent in the literature. The poltergeist that appeared in the home of Huguenot minister Francois Perrault in Macon in 1612 (see **FT357:44-50**) pulled blankets off the beds, and then it started to talk, with a whistling noise initially, much like the Bell Witch. It began to sing a simple tune of five notes. It recounted malicious stories and outright lies – #Fakenews. Like the Bell Witch, the Macon Devil sang popular and also religious songs. These 'auditions' lasted for two months. Huge stones were thrown around the house, mysteriously causing no harm. It seemed to have a fondness for the servant girl, imitating her broad patois and apporting wood when she needed to make a fire. It attacked a friend of the servant girl in her bed, viciously.

There are other similarities to some other cases. A girl being dragged by the hair? It happened to farmer's daughter Christina in Cologne, Germany, in 1260. Inexplicable scratchings from around a bedstead belonging to young girls at night? A poltergeist stopping a carriage or cart connected to the haunted family? Both of those happened in the Lamb Inn in England, 1761, before, it seems, the Bell Witch stopped the coach of General Jackson as it approached the Bell house.

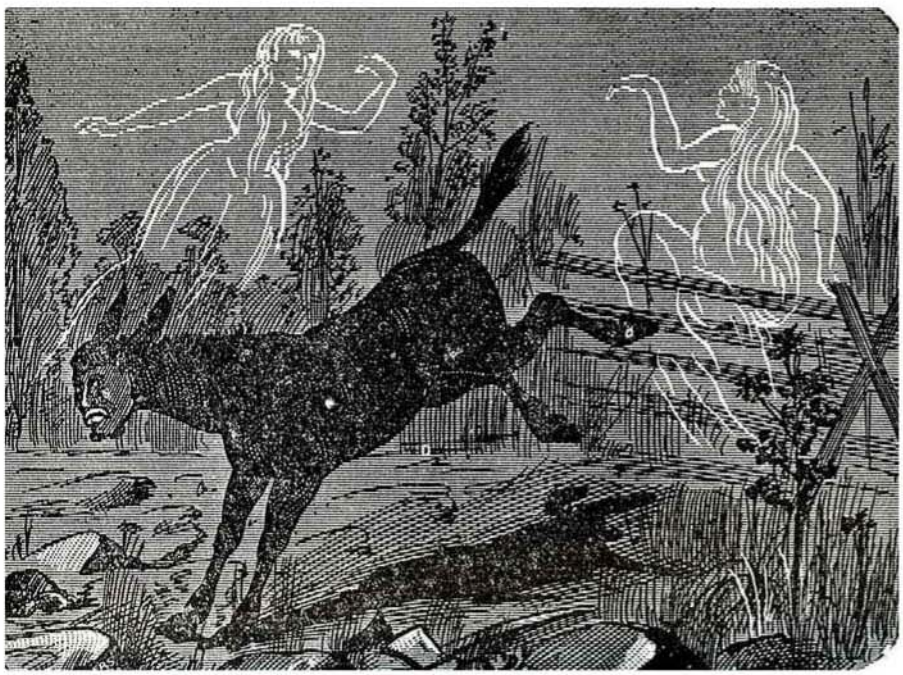
DEADLY SPIRITS

The role of faith and especially Wesleyanism has not been much remarked upon in this story, but it seems to me a central feature. Shaker folks are attacked by the Bell Witch in one late account as they ride by on the main road [2] – the Shakers, it's often forgotten, are the godfathers and mothers of modern spiritualism.

Perhaps this detail is not as random as one might think. Red River Baptist Church stands at the confluence of the Red River and Sulphur Fork Creek in Port Royal. Two things happened in 1817 which I consider apposite to the case. The first was that two young members of the Bell household – Esther and Jesse – got married, which would have changed the entire atmosphere of the home. The second was that in July 1817 Reuben Ross, an elder, preached[3] an Arminian sermon at the funeral of Miss Eliza Norfleet. It went completely against the idea of Primitive Baptist Faith practised at the church till that point. So to be clear on this – there was a schism in the Baptist church that Bell attended just months before his meeting with the witch. This new form of worship was inspired by John Wesley. Could it be that under the new evangelical thrall of Wesleyanism, the Bells consciously or unconsciously replicated the situation of John Wesley's childhood?

There's actually a colonial American version of the Bell Witch. Before his involvement with the Salem trials both Cotton Mather and his father Increase Mather remarked on a case that is, unlike the Bell Witch, far better witnessed and detailed, despite taking place over 120 years earlier.

Lithobolia, or the Stone-throwing devil is a 7,000-word pamphlet from 1698, a first-hand account of a poltergeist attack that lasted three months on the East Coast of America. Increase Mather had already mentioned the haunting in his 1684 book *Illustrious*



TOP: The Bell house photographed in 1909 and long since gone. **ABOVE:** The witch turns the slave Dean into a mule with a human face.

Providences, but this was from a reliable first-hand witness.

In 1682, the household of George Walton was subjected to a thunderous and frightening stone-throwing assault after a land dispute with a crone-like neighbour. A spirit creature was observed. Despite taking shelter in the most defendable part of the building, as clapboard splintered and windows smashed, the stones seemed somehow to follow them all inside, as if they were coming through the fabric of the building, hitting two children quite badly on their legs. Author of the pamphlet Richard Chamberlain, a lawyer employed by the British colonial government, and thus an excellent witness all things considered, noticed the stones were hot, as if snatched from a fire.

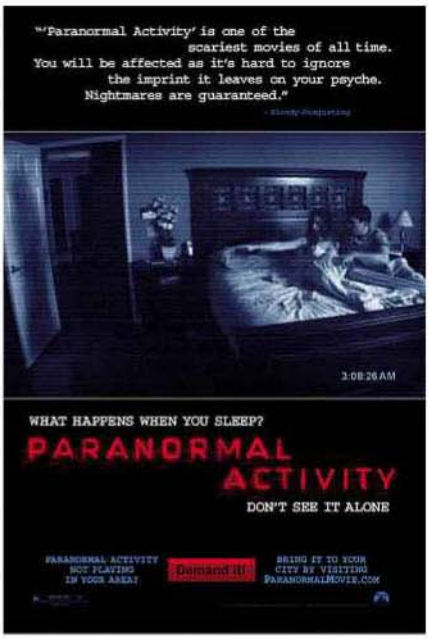
More stones came down the chimney and knocked over candlesticks in the room. These "lapidary salutations" carried on for three months, following Walton into woodlands, into fields during a hay harvest, and even out to sea, where one day rowing in a canoe he was struck hard on the head by three rock missiles propelled across the open water. They broke his skull, and he never really recovered.

Walton blamed the 'Great Island Devil' on a dispute with a local woman over land rights; Hannah Jones was, it was said, *a witch*. According to Chamberlain's account, Walton's annexing of a piece of land incurred her wrath and the doom-laden promise that he would "never quietly injoy [sic] that piece of Ground". Like the Bell Witch, The Great Island Devil commences with the glimpse of a 'familiar' (a demon associated with a witch, or maybe even the witch herself in shape-shifting form), though in this case the devil-creature was a cat.

This attempt to harm Walton really reads like an attempt to kill him. This particular idea – that ghosts can murder you – later became associated with the Bell Witch case and seems something specific to American folklore. [4] It doesn't come out of European ghost-belief so much as witchcraft belief, shunted into the realm of ghosts.

THE KINGDOM OF SHADOWS

Before I wrote a book about ghosts I worked for many years in the darkness of the cinema, viewing films for a living. The spectral aspect of viewing films never failed to strike me. It is the world of dreams and memories. Early cinema is rooted in death and hauntings: for a very brief few months, during 1896, the X-ray vied with the moving image for entertainment purposes in London's Regent Street, which resulted in a number of skeleton films, and headless films, since trickery and spookery and shocks in the dark are a natural fit with the motion picture. The earliest cinemas were highly dangerous and the nitrate film-stock used is these days classified as an explosive material; the brilliant silvery light of the show was tempted to lance across the auditorium and burn everyone to cinders, as it did once in Paris in May, 1897 (126


"'Paranormal Activity' is one of the scariest movies of all time. You will be affected as it's hard to ignore the imprint it leaves on your psyche. Nightmares are guaranteed."
3:08:26 AM
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SLEEP?
PARANORMAL ACTIVITY
DON'T SEE IT ALONE
Demand It!

ABOVE: The 2005 film *An American Haunting* was based on the Bell Witch. **ABOVE:** Films such as *Paranormal Activity* (2007) have drawn on ideas of supernatural surveillance and murderous ghosts.

Sometimes the details of movies are lifted directly from the Bell Witch case

dead). Maxim Gorky, in a famous review of Lumiere's process written in July 1896, was much taken with the ghostliness of film, that the people shown walking and toiling would one day be dead, and yet they would persist in the "kingdom of shadows". Cinema was, he noted "not life but its shadow, it is not motion but its soundless spectre".

For many years writing three columns weekly for *The Independent*, I'd recognise source material in ghost movies that my fellow critics might not notice. The eerie, rippling linen sheets fanned by an evil entity in *Paranormal Activity*? A detail cribbed directly from the Sauchie poltergeist (Scotland, 1983). The raw steak crawling across the kitchen surface in *Poltergeist?* "Some sausages took a journey round the room" – The Giddings poltergeist (Milwaukee, 1874).

Sometimes the details of movies were directly lifted from the Bell Witch case. There's *Mama* (2013), magicking fresh cherries out of thin air for the children to feed on. The moment where the father in *The Witch* (2015) walks down his lines of ruined corn in his perilous fragment of patented land seems to echo John Bell's first encounter with his nemesis.

The main influence of this Tennessee story is on cinema. It's to the Bell Witch you may look for the Indian Burial Ground trope, so beloved by Stephen King, so pushed by Hans Holzer over the whole Amityville debacle, which was really just Bell Witch 1.5. It's pretty much the source of the 'Magical Negro' trope as well. [5] You could make a case for Bell Witch pioneering the narrative of the 'Home Invasion', long before the Hollywood Western came up with the Apache raid on pioneer homesteads. It's really just the same thing, Native Americans either with guns or in spirit, or with magical help, taking back what is rightfully theirs, or at the very least revealing a shamanic

understanding of landscape and where you should not build houses. You don't churn butter at the gateway to the other world: you leave your dead there.

The idea of surveillance, supernatural and intrusive, which so marks the Bell Witch narrative, has segued nicely into the supernatural utilisation of technology of *Ringu* (2000) – both in Japan and the original low-budget *Paranormal Activity* (2007). Bell Witch is there for the eruption of the graveyard in *Poltergeist* (1986), and for that matter, the visit of Revd. Kane in *Poltergeist II* (1986). Found-footage pioneer *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and *The Blair Witch* (2016) are also fellow travellers straight from Adams Station, a fact acknowledged by the filmmakers with the original film's website supported by a spoof item that name-checked the Bell Witch. As a general folkloric concept, it even sneaks its way into a children's animation *Paranorman* (2012), about a witch who is set to return to a small town. It's even present, to a much lesser extent, in a lot of TV cable shows such as *Grimm* and *Sleepy Hollow*, which again involve elements of prophecy connected to supernatural foes, and a haunted bloodline.

The Bell Witch is why the spiteful and murderous ghost – very rare in ghost stories purporting to be real – is still the mainstay and supernatural gold-standard of Hollywood.

For the purposes of researching this article I sat down and re-watched the best-known film adapted directly from the Bell Witch legend, *An American Haunting* (2005). It's roundly disliked by Bell Witch aficionados as the main aspect of the haunt, the voices from nowhere, cinematically problematic and possibly quite farcical, is nowhere to be found.

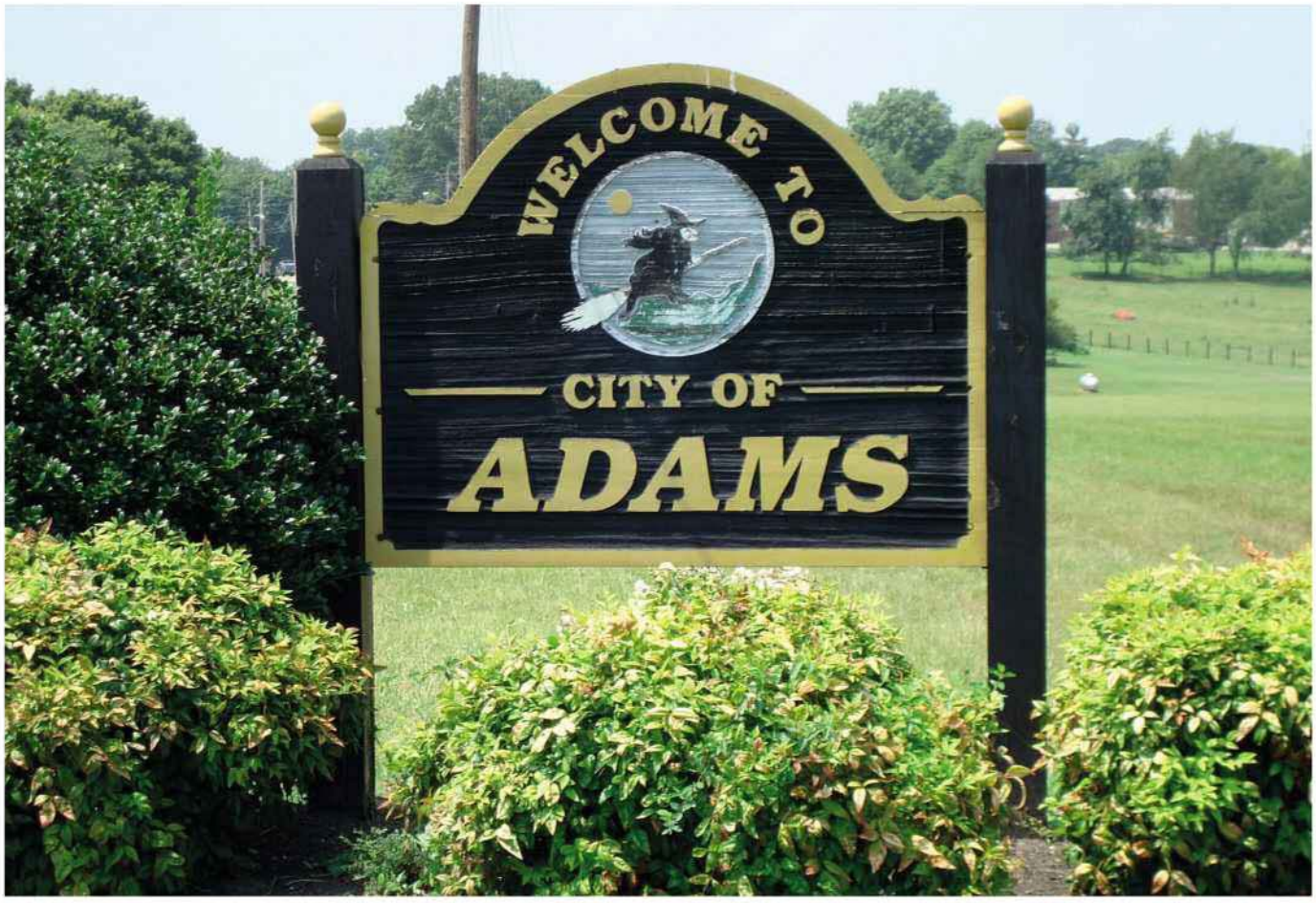
An American Haunting with its "true events validated by the State of Tennessee as the only case in US history where a spirit has caused the death of a human being" suggests the only odd activity going on in the Bell household was a cover story for a father raping his daughter, an incest scenario first suggested by the great parapsychologist Nandor Fodor [6] and revisited recently by a Tennessee medium claiming to have been in touch with the spirit of Betsy Bell; she says John Bell was in fact poisoned by a slave (perhaps by Dean's wife, who made him the charm) for not defending Betsy from the sexual attentions of one of her seven brothers.[7]

There are two other intriguing minor theories about the Bell Witch that are worth repeating. The first concerns the character of the local schoolmaster, Richard Powell. To the question '*cui bono*' for the entire story of the Bell Witch, all signs point to the pedagogue Powell. He is our Southern Ichabod Crane. That the witch, at least in the later version, told Betsy not to marry Joshua, left her teacher free to marry his girl-bride. One report says he was the witch behind the whole business, and indeed, was seen with 'Gallant Books' or books of conjuration. It's worth reminding ourselves that the male witch who conjured up the devils at Tedworth was actually transported to America in the days when criminals were sent to the colonies, after being tried in Salisbury. How many witches or poor souls condemned for an interest in the hermetic were sent on similar one-way journies by the British penal system? We shall never know. Powell was a mathematics teacher and it's an interesting detail that the witch family have names such as 'Mathematics' and 'Cycropracy'.

The second minor detail is that Ingram was a Mason and his whole story possibly runs along Masonic lines. The incident concerning the search for treasure under the great rock in the southwest part of the Bell estate involves digging a whole six feet square and "nearly as many feet deep". The 'Sacred Vault' in Masonry is a cube, and the southwest corner of the lodge is where a Mason is 'hoodwinked' into Second or Fellow Craft degree. The day John Bell has his shoes pulled off is perhaps a reference to their ritual of 'Discalceation' [8] – though the handshaking detail with the witch seems to predate Ingram, who in 1909 was buried according to Masonic ritual. [9]

A STORY OF SHAME

Perhaps I'll never go to Adams. Perhaps reading about it is enough. There are at least 17 books on the subject of that braying,



ABOVE: Adams, Tennessee, today makes the most of its most supernatural associations, presenting a picture-book, broomstick-riding witch to visitors.

ABOVE: General, later President, Andrew Jackson visits the Bell house in Ingram's account.

profane voice of raw America. Written into its very weft and warp is a story of shame, not just for slavery. The reported attendance of General Jackson in one account has an unintended poignancy. As President Jackson, he enacted the brutal removal of the local Cherokee, under the Indian Removal Act of 28 May 1830, in order to steal their land, one of the most unpleasant acts of any presidency which the Native American descendants still regard as a form of genocide. [10]

Let's be clear about this – in the period before the Bell Witch, John Bell Snr was setting his slaves to clear virgin woodland, expanding his property from 220 acres to 330 acres. In one of the earliest communications with the witch, who had not yet learned to talk, she rapped out the number of miles to Port Royal when asked – seven of them.

Port Royal plays a pivotal role in the tragic modern history of the Native American. Port Royal – a once thriving town now reduced to a hamlet – is a sorry marker in the 'Trail of Tears' and is also where the doctor came from when John Bell was poisoned by the witch. Perhaps that same doctor, Dr Hopson, treated or didn't treat the Cherokee as they died on their way to their new territories, and Port Royal has a kind of notional curse on it, or a race-memory of one – no wonder it has largely been put back to woodland, and is now a state park.[11] It has been – rare for this part of world – returned to nature and un-patented, as if only nature can remove the stain.

A similar situation happened in neighbouring Canada a few years later, when in 1829 a brief article in the *Detroit Gazette* told of the 'Baldoon Mystery' (see "The Baldoon Mystery" by Christopher Laursen and Paul Cropper, **FT315:30-39**). It was a very similar rural-pioneer poltergeist attack on a log cabin, later written up by one of the family who witnessed it, Neil Macdonald, who was actually five at the time. Bullets and stones from the nearby river were thrown, wet and waterlogged, at the family, and later the cabin burned down after a catastrophic number of spontaneous fires. The same case is mentioned by Peter Jones in his *History of the Ojebway Indians* (1861), but he never actually named the McDonald family. From the perspective of the Ojibwe, the haunting was caused by 'forest fairies'.

So what really was the Bell Witch, the actual thing itself? The field-beast, the taxonomical absurdity that bloodied a girl and killed a man and could fly so comprehendingly round the neighbourhood that it could mimic the call of a pig-herder and the summer hum of gathering bees, or sing like a bird beneath a window.

What are the culprits assembled? They run as follows.

It was: an unidentified spirit from North Carolina. A spiritual attack by relative Kate Batts. A family of devils. A poltergeist. A cover-story for Betsy Bell's evident self-harm after being sexually assaulted by a family member. A tall tale pimped by a newspaperman, using Masonic images. A psychic eruption from working slaves. A Wesleyan foundation story. An endogenous entity or elemental connected with Cherokee burial practices. A chaotic installation of telluric energy released by the very unstable geology [12] of the area (something all poltergeist commentators know about).

Why is it always trotted out as a true story, when there is only a sliver of truth to it? The only reason most people consider it so is because they have repeatedly been told it is true, and this creates a series of apophenic prompts. It seems entirely plausible that there was some manner of inexplicable phenomena right at the beginning of the tale, but its main gift is a popular story-telling one, to cinema.

Where the Tarry Town Hessian rides on the salary of British aggression, Adams station is where the great American quilt is pulled from the hands of the dreaming populace. What strikes the non-American about the Bell Witch story is the dogged undertow of race, and how the landscape, though patented after clearance, suffers a double-implication from the African slaves who cleared it and the Native Americans who were cleared from it beforehand. Both the Bell Witch (1817–1821) and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (published in 1820) are constructs of the same era, and between them set out the whole landscape of subsequent American supernatural belief, which drinks deeply from cups of witchcraft, guilt, ownership and warfare. They both arrive in a sweet spot between belief systems, when susceptibility to witchcraft had largely faded and spiritualism had not yet arrived.

Hickory Haunts – both of them.

ROGER CLARKE is is a former writer and film critic at the *Independent* and a regular contributor to *Fortean Times*. His book *A Natural History of Ghosts* is widely available from Penguin.

NOTES

1 See *Skeptical Enquirer*, vol 38 No1, 2014. Joe Nickell argues that some spiritualist references in the 'Red Book' are anachronistic, as are certain words: "the word detective did not originate until about 1840 and then in England as an adjective". Furthermore, textual analysis proves "Bell and Ingram had comparative reading levels" which were "respectively 14.3 and 14.4". This is college level – unlikely for a rural farmer like Bell.

2 https://ckc4me.wordpress.com/2012/10/25/the-mysterious-spirit-of-adams-tennessee/bell-witch-chasing-shakers/

3 John M Goodman Jr, *Red River Baptist Church – A History*, pp40-41.

4 Another American poltergeist that inflicted injury was reported in 1905 as the 'Deserted Surrency' case in Georgia: it also had a slave-owning history. http://trove.nla. gov.au/ newspaper/article/4942382/924667.

5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magical_Negro

6 *Haunted People: Story of the Poltergeist down the Centuries* (1951).

7 www.tennessean.com/story/news/local/robertson/2015/10/26/bell-witch-legend-gets-new-twist/74640802/

8 www.masonicworld.com/education/files/artoct02/rite_of_discalceation.htm

9 Joe Nickell, op cit.

10 www.cherokee.org/About-The-Nation/History/Trail-of-Tears/A-Brief-History-of-the-Trail-of-Tears

11 http://tnstateparks.com/parks/about/port-royal

12 There were several earthquakes in the area in 1811-1812 which caused the Mississippi to run backwards and form the Reelfoot Lake and reportedly rang Liberty Bell all the way over in Philadelphia.

THE HIEROPHANT'S APPRENTICE PRESENTS

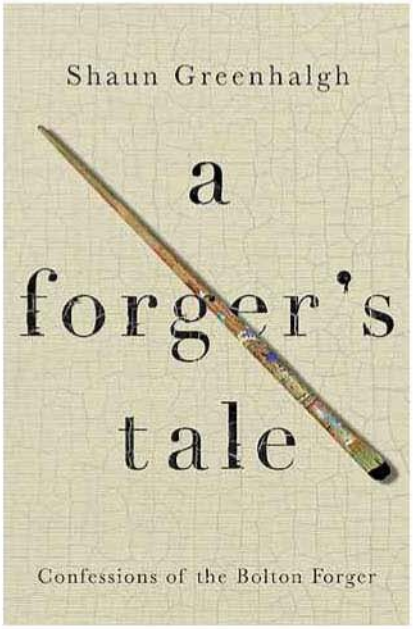
BUILDING A FORTEAN LIBRARY

27. WHEN LEONARDO MET SALLY AT THE CO-OP

An alertness for fakes, frauds, hoaxes, false inferences and misrepresentations ought to be central to any intelligent fortean's thinking. After all, one doesn't have to be a conspiracy theorist to recognise that things are not always what they're said to be. And if forteana are essentially tricksterish in nature (as we've argued in these pages), the connection between genuine anomalies and the opportunities they present for hoaxing is unavoidable. So, when an admitted, indeed convicted, forger writes a confessional memoir, we should take notice. Shaun Greenhalgh specialised in artworks of all kinds, from thousands of years BC to the 20th century, rather than in mysterious artefacts, but he has much to tell us about a forger's methods and the way his mind works – and not a little about human gullibility, too.

It may seem paradoxical to take as truth the word of an admitted forger in his after-the-fact 'confessions'. *Pro tempore*, however, we don't have much choice. Given what Greenhalgh has to say about his methods and his dealings with the 'art world' it seems likely he is indeed being honest, which isn't quite the same as telling the truth – what he may be omitting might be another story. His obvious anger smokes off the pages at the received wisdom (at the time of his conviction) as to what he and his family got up to, of his own motives, and at aspersions cast on his family, particularly his dad. Here is what *FT*, (**FT245:22-24**; see also **250:40-45**) covering what was being reported at the time, had to say: "Shaun Greenhalgh… born into poverty… resented art dealers, especially southern ones; it has been suggested that he came to believe that galleries refused his original work just because he was a working-class lad and, worse, from Bolton. Somehow or other his parents became involved in his revenge on the snobberies of art and class, with his father George (an accomplished, lifetime purveyor of yarns) acting as frontman, laden with plausible tales of acquisition and bogus documentation, while his mother Olive acted as technical assistant in producing thousands of drawings, paintings, sculptures and silverwork." None of this would seem to be entirely the case.

Greenhalgh, his siblings and his parents weren't poverty-stricken. They lived in a council house because they liked it – it was a huge improvement on where they had grown up – and they saw no reason to leave. Shaun did in fact live for a while with his girlfriend, who sadly died; and he spent a while as a Royal Marine



recruit, leaving a few weeks before completing training. A dedicated on- and off-road biker, he was no stranger to risk, sometimes with hairy consequences. There was also an adolescent period of bomb-making (we could compare notes). He didn't have a neurotic problem with southerners, posh rich folk, or the art world, although he was not much impressed with some art dealers' ethics. He arrived at that disillusion through experience, not prejudice. His father did act as 'frontman' on some of the sales, but by no means all. He regrets involving his parents in his work, and is particularly pissed off by stories in the media that his dad had deserted from the Army and told tall stories. George, who may well have been a fine raconteur, served in the Army in World War II, in North Africa with the 1st Army and in Italy, where he was wounded, and was awarded a pension for his pains. Greenhalgh is silent on any part his mother played in his work, so we don't know if she acted as his assistant or not. She was catering manager at one of the big Bolton mills. A policeman who quoted her as saying she'd never been out of Bolton in her life is belied by Shaun's accounts of annual family holidays in Southport and St Ives. More likely she meant she'd never *lived* anywhere else. Overall Greenhalgh is underwhelmed by the police's carryings-on, and quietly pays them back by habitually, and surely knowingly, referring to them as 'the Yardies'. Yo, bruv.

As for taking up forgery to get back at the art world because he had failed to sell his own original work, Greenhalgh is straightforward to the point of bluntness. "I don't really consider myself an artist at all," he writes. "I have the actual ability and am prepared to put in the hard effort that all good art requires. But I lack the artist's original vision." He was certainly able to discern this in others – notably his heroes Rembrandt and Bernini – but, while still at school, he became intrigued with *how* the things he admired came to be. One of his dad's angling pals – a car dealer and scrap metal merchant – was also an art collector, who lived in "an Aladdin's cave of antiques of all kinds." Among the treasures were two bronze Benin plaques. "I was allowed to lift them off the wall and hold them, looking closely at how they were made – something that interested me more than the actual work. Then, as now, the first thing that comes into my mind when I see a work of art is not how beautiful or fine it is, but how was it put together? Could I do as good a job? If not, why not?"

Greenhalgh clearly has what's called 'a good eye' for art, but also an extraordinary eye for detail in technique. "One outstanding effect I saw in the [works of the 18th-century sculptor] Clodion was the way in which the merest scratches could produce a big depth of field in a shallow relief, and how just six slashes of the stylus could suggest a

cavalcade of figures." Apart from noting such visual effects, he went to endless lengths to source the correct materials for his work, whether stone, paint, paper, metal or ceramic. You learn a whole lot about who used what and how from this book – his excursions into gold and its admixtures over a few millennia, for example, are fascinating. In light of how he (mostly) dealt with the art world, he produced not so much forgeries, fakes, or copies as *reproductions in the style* of renowned artists, using, as far as possible, the materials they used. And each of them was a mildly obsessive response to the challenge: how did they do it? Possibly his most successful 'reproduction' was of Sally from the Co-op (where he worked for a while; she was apparently a bit of a prig and bossy with it). Produced in the style of Leonardo, her profile portrait (pictured at right) was reported to be now worth £100 million. Whether that figure sank after Greenhalgh claimed authorship, he doesn't say. But he does remark that through his acquaintance with the art trade he has "developed a jaded eye in all matters of genuineness… [T]hese days I'm wholly unimpressed by authorship or the supposed age or origin of a work of art. Only its quality really matters. It's always best to buy only what you like. Then you can't be disappointed, can you?" Or, as he says elsewhere: "The next time you visit a gallery, look at the artwork before you read the label and don't believe either, just enjoy the sight. Does it really matter who made it or when? And if some don't think that way, then we are at cross-purposes. I'm talking of art, and they of money."

Greenhalgh's relations with those who talk of money took various forms. Sometimes he adopted a kind of wilful ignorance or innocence: selling, usually for modest amounts, paintings or artefacts to a dealer without making any claims for the works, while the dealer added a fake provenance and/or signature, and sold them on for considerably tidier sums. Some dealers commissioned work 'in the style of' (insert name of choice) and Greenhalgh, knowing but not knowing, would duly oblige. Or more disingenuously he would put a work into auction, the auction house would declare it genuine, and further tidy sums were shared all round. Even here bizarre things would happen. One purchaser paid £100,000 at auction for a bust of US President John Adams – then found he couldn't sell it on for a better price, and asked for a refund. Imagine doing that with a vintage Bentley. But Greenhalgh, "never wanting to draw attention", coughed up. On another occasion, plaques and rings he had made in ancient Egyptian New Kingdom style,

"A BOOK LYING IDLE ON A SHELF IS WASTED AMMUNITION."

Henry Miller

from the finest quality yellow jasper, were reckoned to be "made of plastic, of all things", and by "a respected authority on all things Egyptian". Greenhalgh comments drily: "Whether this was done in the hope of acquiring them for buttons or out of ignorance, I don't know. But ignorance on this scale for such a person would be unusual, wouldn't it?"

Like other hoaxers and forgers before him, Greenhalgh incorporated deliberate errors into his work. He implies that this was his non-verbal way of saying *Caveat emptor* – in other words, if buyers had looked more closely or with a more expert eye they should have known the work wasn't what it seemed (or was claimed) to be. Of one Lowry pastel drawing picked up by the 'Yardies' he says: "I had only initialled it LSL and, as in most of my productions, it contained a fault, a skew in the perspective, something Lowry himself would never have done. He was a draughtsman of the first order…" (There is more to this story that exposes quite clearly the dishonesty of the dealer involved.) When he created his ceramic 'Gauguin' faun – over which he took immense pains – he made it in three parts, "something Gauguin didn't do. His stuff was slab-built [made from a single piece of clay], with modelled and cut detail, not cast in a plaster mould." That was one elementary-dear-Watson clue that experts overlooked in the history of piece's journey through the art market. And as we've noted elsewhere, fauns are renowned for sporting prodigious whangers. Greenhalgh's 'Gauguin' lacked this egregious detail. "I left the Faun without tackle to suggest that the sculpture lacked balls," he explains mischievously, and you can almost hear his inner guffaw. Experts preferred "weird and wonderful theories and postulations". (Did these clowns think Gauguin was some puritanical stranger to physicality and sensuality?)

Perhaps the funniest instance of Greenhalgh's outwitting the experts concerns one of his most famous pieces, his reconstruction of the Risley Park Lanx (a lanx is a Roman serving plate; this one was made of silver and highly ornamented). The original – reckoned to date to AD 405 – was found in Derbyshire in 1729, but then disappeared – creating an irresistible opportunity for the forger to twinkle-toe into the breach, upon his fairy feet. Although he suspected the original lanx had been pewter, Greenhalgh conscientiously recreated a "typically high-quality Roman" silver alloy for the purpose, recrafted the lanx from contemporary engravings, and his dad George sold it to a dealer for £5,000. Said dealer reputedly flogged it on to the British Museum for 10 times that. Now hearken to son Shaun: "One of [its] glaring faults… was never picked up by anyone who examined it. … The 18th-century engraver drew the fourth-century fragments not in fourth-century style, but in that of his own age. For example… the large boar at bay in the central panel is distinctly un-Roman, more of a porker that wouldn't look out of place on a Hanoverian pig farm…" An alternative explanation is that the 1729 'find' was itself not quite kosher (sorry, pig). It's tempting to read this thought between Greenhalgh's lines. It also tends to confirm our thought that hoaxers do their thing in the underlying spirit of 'Let's put this out there and see what happens.' *Catch me if you can.*

This is a good lively read. Greenhalgh manages to use "bollocks" in most of its meanings and refreshes the soul with best Northern directness – as on punks: "…this lot looked like right wallies to me. But I suppose I was similarly wallyish to them, only I wasn't held together with safety pins and snot." Reet, lad!

Shaun Greenhalgh, *A Forger's Tale: Confessions of the Bolton Forger*, with introduction by Waldemar Januszczak, Allen & Unwin 2017.

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
FortеanTimes | SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

FREE FortеanTimes EXCLUSIVE MUG

when you subscribe

Open your mind with **Fortean Times**. Get your monthly fix of strange phenomena, curiosities, prodigies and portents delivered direct to your door.

Your Phenomenal Offer

- Get your first **3 issues for £1**
- Exclusive **FREE Fortean Times** mug
- **SAVE up to 11%** on the shop price if you continue your subscription
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops

YOURS FREE!

SUBSCRIBE TO FortеanTimes TODAY!

Call +44(0)330 333 9492

Or visit dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes

QUOTING OFFER CODE **P1705P**

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF BOOKS TO: BOOK REVIEWS, FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 2409, LONDON NW5 4NP, UK.

The government and the aliens

UFO events from Roswell to the Villas Boas abduction are blamed on the American intelligence community, but the claim of government manipulation is overblown in this worthwhile book

The Greys Have Been Framed

Exploitation in the UFO Community

Jack Brewer

CreateSpace 2016

$14.95. 275pp, index

Jack Brewer is not overly concerned with the UFO mystery. Instead, on his blog *The UFO Trail* and in *The Greys Have Been Framed*, his focus is on how researchers, government agents and agencies, and other charlatans, exploit UFOs and ufology to manipulate, defraud, deceive and further traumatise the already traumatised or unstable.

Following a brief discussion of how certain personality types are susceptible to the manipulations of charismatic leaders (e.g. Heaven's Gate or the Seekers) who use the UFO myth to propagate eschatologies meant to subjugate their followers, Brewer turns to the use of hypnotic regression in abduction research, recounting in painful detail Budd Hopkins's and David Jacobs's controversial methods. Rather than assisting their subjects to recover from traumatic experiences, their methodologies, Brewer argues, are essentially a means of extracting repressed and often fabricated memories (the result of screens installed by aliens ostensibly to cover their tracks) that help confirm their own biases concerning the alien abduction narrative.

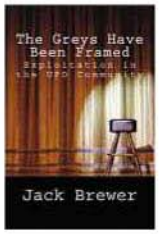
Hypnotic regression is now largely dismissed as a means of memory recovery. Views on the intricacies of memory have evolved considerably; most experts now discount the "recording tape" view of memory acquisition and retention. As for claims by abduction researchers that the aliens are undertaking breeding programmes to produce alien/human hybrids, Brewer suggests that genetic testing could easily detect manipulation of the human genome.

In detailing these researchers' practices, Brewer draws on Jacobs's indefensible treatment of 'Emma Woods', Hopkins's former collaborator (and ex-wife), and Carol Rainey's observations on Hopkins's credulity and lack of concern for subjects' wellbeing. He notes that abduction researchers tend to label their critics "debunkers", as Hopkins did Rainey, rather than addressing criticism. Tyler Kokjohn, in a brief interview included here, provides a sober – and damning – analysis of alien abduction research and its capacity for self-deception, bad science and lack of ethics.

In the second half of the book Brewer, drawing largely on research by Nick Redfern and Mark Pilkington, addresses the storied history of government involvement with UFOs and their chicanery. The government infiltrated UFO groups and independent researchers, Brewer contends, to create confusion and to protect top-secret espionage and spy efforts, including advanced weaponry and equipment – essentially spy planes and satellites. Moreover, in 1947 the FBI believed that UFO sightings – including those spotted on radar – were hoaxed in order to cause mass hysteria. Two years later, Brewer states, the CIA got in on the action, using the UFO for psychological manipulation. By 1952 they were manufacturing saucers using electronic counter-measures technology to create false radar blips (as in the 1952 Washington DC flap).

"Many of these high strangeness events cannot be accounted for by the sciences"

Special focus is paid to James Carrion's research on the 1940s "ghost rocket" phenomenon as an example of government deception, and to the Betty and Barney Hill abduction, which Brewer inexplicably regards as an example of manipulation by the intelligence community. More recent examples include Area 51-stationed Airman Simone Mendez's experience with a fraudulent government document that allegedly concerned NORAD tracking of UFOs, and the Leah Haley abduction case and Carpenter Affair, a strange admixture of the classic abduction narrative of missing time, repressed memories, and unexplained body markings. These combine with the familiar conspiracy narrative of intimidating visits from unidentified military personnel, and the subsequent exploitation of Haley's story by researchers in the ufological establishment, namely MUFON.



Brewer considers many UFO-related events to be the result of government deception (including everything from Roswell to Rendlesham, from the Flatwoods Monster to the Villas Boas abduction and beyond), a continuation and expansion of Cold War mind control and propaganda efforts of individuals and institutions involved in the intelligence community. His claim is bold – and something of a stretch. Apart from shenanigans such as the Bennewitz affair and Serpo, much of the mythology government actors brought to life drew from civilian experience and literature, itself deriving in part from pulp fiction and horror and science fiction films, in a kind of modern folklore.

Many of these high strangeness events defy comprehension and cannot be accounted for by the sciences – including consciousness studies or indeed current physics – let alone being the result of something as prosaic as mere government manipulation.

Brewer provides adequate citations (his references are limited to websites, perhaps a sign of the times but also betraying the oddly limited scope of his researches) and a passable, if limited, index. The sections detailing government-perpetrated human experimentation seem a little beside the point, though they illustrate the extent to which some publicly funded agencies – primarily the CIA – engaged in unethical, illegal, and harmful activities.

The Greys Have Been Framed (the title is odd, given the subject matter) is an enlightening, if ultimately flawed, look at the use of the UFO phenomenon by professionals in and out of government for decidedly non-altruistic purposes. For those interested in pursuing a more nuanced understanding of UFO phenomena, Brewer provides a cautionary tale, warning against the tendency of government agencies and some individuals

Continued on p62

Socialist Martian bees?

The Universe has prompted a range of explanations ranging from the barking (alien Essex socialists) to the unprovable (String Theory). Fun.

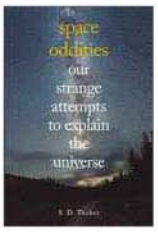
Space Oddities

Our Strange Attempts to Explain the Universe

SD Tucker

Amberley Publishing 2017
Pb, 317pp, ind, bib, notes, £14.99, ISBN 9781445662626

To most non-physicists (and many physicists), String Theory, science's latest attempt to explain the Universe, sounds batshit. It claims particles are strings, vibrating in up to 11 dimensions, all but three of them invisible to us as they are rolled up somewhere in the world of subatomic particles. From these entities, the entirety of the observable Universe emerges. (I precis a bit.) The maths is immaculate and the logic impeccable, but the theory has generated no hypotheses that can be tested to help decide whether Strings are anything more than an elegant mathematical fantasy. In this, String Theory takes its place in a long line of seemingly barking and untestable explanations for why the Universe exists and how it works. It is this grand tradition that SD Tucker explores in *Space Oddities*.



The String theorists are rank amateurs when it comes to far-out explanations. Their predecessors turned it up to 11 when imagining how it all works. The floridly strange afro-centric cosmology of Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, and its polar opposite, the proto-Nazi Vril Society, were united in a shared obsession with channelling cosmic energies through their hair. Hans Horbinger's World Ice Theory portrayed an Earth surrounded by layers of cosmic ice, an idea also beloved of the Nazis. (It had a peculiar afterlife in post-war English suburbs, where one of Horbinger's few British disciples continued to fly the flag up until the 1980s.) And all this before you get beyond the introduction…

Tucker provides a bizarre array of explanations for the Universe, which he cross-references with developments in astronomy and space science to reflect on how one has influenced the other. The Flat Earth Society, for instance, is looked at from the perspective of their responses to space exploration and the, for them, inconvenient truths it brought back. Contactees such as Villas-Boas get a look-in, with the origin stories given them by their 'space brothers' being considered. I found this the weakest area of the book; for the most part, these cosmologies are not very developed and I found myself looking forward to meatier theoretical constructs. I like Gerald Heard's super-intelligent, quasi-socialist bees from Mars, however, partly inspired by Fort's writing, and the actual socialist sect, the Posadists, who maintained a belief in alien socialists while fomenting unrest in Essex car plants.

He finds room for the very British weirdness of George King and his Ætherius Society, which believed there was an alien satellite orbiting Earth, bathing our planet in love, but I was disappointed to find no mention of Philip K Dick and his VALIS (Vast Active Living Intelligence System) satellite. This allegedly zapped Dick with a pink laser and prompted him to write his vast *Exigesis* demonstrating we were really living in the second century AD and that modern civilisation was an alien-created illusion, a belief system that would be entirely at home here.

When he does get on to the large-scale conceptual constructs Tucker does not disappoint, giving us even more detail of the extremely peculiar planetary sex theories of Charles Fourier that featured in **FT357**, looking at a whole range of eccentric attempts to communicate with other planets, including a lengthy exploration of the career of the determined Martian radio enthusiast 'Dr' Hugh Robinson. One of his exploits involved persuading Gamages department store in London to let him use a high-powered radio receiver they had to listen to Martians, but hopefully, not the Martian Satan that a 19th century visionary claimed to have seen. There's even a look at psychoanalytical theories of the Universe, with the elaborate ideas of one of Jung's patients explored, and also the clearest explanation of the late Colin Bennett's views on UFOs that I've come across. Previously I'd only come across him at *FT* UnCons selling incomprehensible books and making splenetic interjections during talks he disagreed with, but having read this I view him with new respect. Tucker does likewise, but he is not afraid to express forthright views about some of his subjects. He clearly likes John Michell, but William Burroughs gets described as a "drug-abuser and all-round lunatic" and he accuses Elon Musk of having difficulty separating fantasy from reality.

This is a delight to read; just when you think ideas about the Universe can't get any stranger, they do. SD Tucker has done a great service in pulling together and contextualising forgotten (and some not-so-forgotten) theories of life, the Universe and everything in a volume that every fortean's bookshelf would benefit from.

Ian Simmons

★★★★★

Continued from p61

in the ufological community to use experiencers and researchers as means to an end. Brewer may not be interested in the UFOs, yet his efforts to identify these manipulative efforts helps to clear much of the smoke that continues to cloud the field.

Eric Hoffman

★★★★☆

The Stone Cradle

Patrice Chaplin

Clairview 2017
235pp, £13.99, plates, ISBN 9781905570836

In 2007 Patrice Chaplin published *City of Secrets*, the account of her experiences in Girona, Catalonia, from her first visit in 1955, her falling in love with a local poet, José Tarres, and her discovery of a secretive society, of which José was custodian. A tower, long demolished, was esoterically linked to the Tour Magdala, built in Rennes-le-Château by Abbé Bérenger Saunière, who had apparently been a frequent visitor to Girona, and to the Frenchwoman who lived in the house with the tower. It was even possible that José Torres was Saunière's grandson. As for Girona, it was a town of secrets – and they were held by the society.

In *The Stone Cradle* Chaplin returns to Girona – and she's offered the position of custodian of the society. But the man making the offer is improbably smart, and charismatic, and manipulative, and cold. It doesn't just feel like a poisoned chalice; Chaplin's unease in his presence, and the offer itself, almost remind of Christ being tempted by the Devil.

Chaplin's novels often contain autobiographical elements – and her non-fiction books are partly fictionalised. Some of it is straightforward: some people in this book have their own names, while others are pseudonyms, perhaps amalgams, or possibly made up for a functional or dramatic purpose. Many of the events clearly happened; Chaplin leads guided tours to Girona, and they are described in some detail. But other descriptions of events are perhaps more metaphorical, or metaphysical; several are visionary. The stone cradle itself is a stone on a hillside, with mystical properties; often it can't

be found.

What to make of *The Stone Cradle*? How much is objectively real, and how much the author's inner experiences? Perhaps it doesn't matter; following Chaplin's very personal esoteric journeys is always fascinating.

David V Barrett

★★★★☆

Keys to the Temple

Unlocking Dion Fortune's Mystical Qabalah Through Her Occult Novels

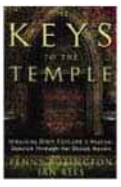
Penny Billington & Ian Rees

Llewellyn Publications 2017

Pb, 265pp, illus, bib, $19.99, ISBN 978073875066

In *Keys to the Temple*, Penny Billington, an active member of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, and Ian Rees, a practising psycho-spiritual psychotherapist, investigate how Dion Fortune's fiction may act as a template for self-discovery.

Dion Fortune (1890–1946), a distinguished occultist, emerged from the Golden Dawn and co-founded the Fraternity of the Inner Light, later authoring a key text in the Western tradition, *The Mystical Qabalah*. Drawing upon Fortune's knowledge and use of the Tree of Life as a tool for psychological development, the authors address her novels *The Goat Foot God* (1929), *The Sea Priestess* (1938), *The Winged Bull* (1935) and the unfinished *Moon Magic* as magical prompts.



Opening with an historical sketch of the Tree, the book is then divided into three interlinked sections taking the reader on a metaphorical and experiential journey from Malkuth to Daath. The first section – Leaving Home – offers a close analysis of the characters and narratives of the novels. The narrative landscape of each is identified with a specific sephira and the archetypal patterns that emerge are further explored. Fortune's early career as a counsellor is never far away as we find even further scrutiny in the second section – Following – as overarching spiritual themes are looked at in detail. At this point the casual reader may well find themselves struggling as the content is focused upon the use of the Tree as an experiential and transformative mechanism. By the final section – Crossing the Bridge – there is no doubt that the book's function is to translate theory into practice. A complete programme of guided meditations complete with a practicable daily schema is outlined. Potential difficulties are considered and advice is clearly on offer.

Keys is clearly written and offers a suitably erudite expansion of the transformative work Fortune began back in the early 20th century. Highly recommended for those already on that journey and for the more informed reader, the book is illustrated and offers a short but concise bibliography that belies its debt to Dion Fortune's individual approach to magical attainment.

Chris Hill

★★★★☆

Strange Vernaculars

How Eighteenth-Century Slang, Cant, Provincial Languages, and Nautical Jargon Became English

Janet Sorensen

Princeton University Press 2017

Hb, 335pp, illus, bib, ind, PRICE, ISBN 9780691169026

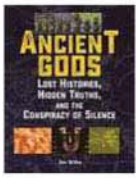
In the 18th century, English went through a process of standardisation that resulted in the creation of a more or less unified national language. At the same time, however, English writers published works dealing with "strange" English: the cant or slang of criminals, beggars and other outsiders, regional dialect and vocabulary, and the technical jargon of sailors. Janet Sorensen argues that these vernacular languages contributed to an understanding of the British – and particularly English – national character as diverse and "free", unrestricted by the limits of an "official" national language.

Each of the three sections is devoted to one of the three "strange vernaculars" Sorensen considers. Most of the book is devoted to the first two sections on cant and regional language. Sorensen draws from a wide range of literary sources, including plays, dictionaries, novels, prints and more. She demonstrates not only how perceptions of this "common" language changed over time but how the very idea of "common" language changed, fluctuating between different meanings and ultimately remaining elusive.

Strange Vernaculars is packed with fascinating examples of early modern slang, jargon and dialect, but it's not intended as a guide to 18th century vernaculars, but rather for an audience with some background in the linguistic and literary history of the era. But for readers interested in the evolution of English, this is a fascinating look at the role strangeness and otherness played in the development of a national language and identity.

James Holloway

★★★★☆



Ancient Gods

Lost Histories, Hidden Truths, and the Conspiracy of Silence

Jim Willis

Visible Ink Press 2017

Pb, Kindle, ePub, xxix, 401pp, illus, bib, ind, $19.95, ISBN 9781578596140

Comprehensive and copiously illustrated compendium of ancient gods, alien visitors, Atlantis, Nibiru, comet catastrophe, lost technologies, prehistoric stone monuments' astronomical alignments, the Aquatic Ape theory, the Flood, leys, the Bible Code, the Mayan Long Count Calendar…

The title's 'conspiracy of silence' refers to orthodox science's refusal to acknowledge anomalous archæological and palæological finds, but Michael Cremo's 'forbidden archæology' (human remains found in geological strata dating well before human existence) forms only a small part of this book.

Sometimes Willis is too uncritical – Zecharia Sitchin was not "one of a small handful of people" able to read Sumerian pictograms (numerous academics and students are well able to do so). And he (or his editors) also lapses into the occasional breathless assertion – a caption reads: "Was the Ark of the Covenant actually an advanced electronic device left behind in Egypt by the Old Ones?"

But these complaints are more than balanced by the book's healthy scepticism regarding Drosnin's 'Bible Code' prophecies and von Däniken's 'Mayan astronaut' stone carving interpretation. Happily, too, the 'Sirius Mystery' of the Dogon and of Sirius B get only a cursory mention, suggesting that Willis is up-to-speed with the discrediting of this theory, wonderful as it is.

Whilst not a Creationist, the author (an ordained minister for over 40 years) reminds us that orthodox scientific theories about the origins of humankind, and how these early humans populated the globe beginning in Africa are just that – theories. Recent DNA discoveries (such as *Denisova hominin*, found in a Siberian cave in 2010) continue to push back accepted chronologies and challenge previously-held ideas of the first humans.

Willis provides an occasional and useful 'alternative history' historiography, as when he acknowledges the unfortunately-named History Channel's influence in having popularised the 'ancient alien' hypothesis.

Familiar names – like Göbekli Tepe – are accompanied by the less familiar, such as Indonesia's Gunung Padang site. New and intriguing snippets like this appear throughout, prompting further investigation.

For some European readers (including this one), *Ancient Gods* will provide a welcome overview of alternative prehistories of the North American continent. Vikings, Celts, Mound Builders (whose earthworks are still visible in Ohio and elsewhere), sophisticated Anasazi stone structures in the 'Four Corners' states of the southwest; all are cited in connection with 'alternative' or 'fringe' histories of the populating of North America, and of the disputed origins of its indigenous peoples.

All in all, a useful work that encompasses a great number of theories, civilisations and geographical regions; indexed and accompanied by a 'timeline of traditionally accepted dates' and a bibliography.

Chris Josiffe

★★★★☆

Something wicked

Transatlantic hysteria in the wake of the English Civil War – and imported demonological texts – prompted a colonial purge of 'witches'

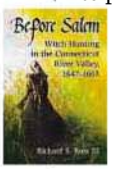
Before Salem

Witch Hunting in the Connecticut River Valley, 1647–1663

Richard S Ross III

McFarland & Co. Inc 2017

Pb, viii + 333pp, £42.50, ISBN 9781476666488



The Salem witchcraft panic of 1692 is the most infamous episode of early modern witch-hunting, immortalised as a parable of paranoia in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Yet historically Salem was an aberration. Other American prosecutions were scarce, scattered and frequently unsuccessful. Yet between the late 1640s and early 1660s there was a deadly flurry in the Connecticut Valley, the subject of Richard S Ross's rich and readable book.

There were just 11 trials – hardly a 'witch hunt', but strange, nonetheless, given the lack of cases before or after. Ross argues that the collision of social anxieties and polarised religious and political ideas was destabilising. The neighbour-hating, devil-fearing mood in the township of Windsor in part involved simple West Country folk shunning lah-di-dah Londoners. In 1647 Windsor's annual mortality rate of four or five shot up to 27, probably due to a flu epidemic. The family of the puritan minister, who had railed against the Devil, was hit particularly hard. The evidence of witchery began to stack up. The final ingredient was fear of Native Americans, and the trauma and paranoia of ethnic war in New England in the mid-1630s and mid-1640s. Images of marauding Indians converged with images of demons and witches in colonial nightmares. Ross compares the psychological damage with modern PTSD.

Connecticut's settlers were also unsettled by the English Civil War and the atmosphere of a 'world turned upside down' after 1642. Ross suggests that the same relaxation of Crown and Church control that made possible Matthew Hopkins's East Anglian witch-hunt prompted American colonists to purge diabolism. The book's originality lies in this English dimension, which Ross handles well. Fortean interest lies in his picture of mounting transatlantic hysteria, helped along by legal and demonological texts exported to foreign plantations. The authorities in Boston and Hartford watched suspects in case they were visited by diabolic familiars, and searched their bodies for teats where these imps suckled blood. These techniques were England's gift to America. Ross also delves into the back-stories of his characters, which helps us to make sense of their conflicts and predicaments.

Although Ross's description of New England society is superb, his commentary on the motherland is not always convincing. I'm not sure there was a "conscious effort on the part of the English government to suppress witchcraft trials" in the 1630s; better to say that royal indifference meant trials were not encouraged. Nor did the Civil War overcome a "general level of skepticism" about witchcraft, or create "an untenable psychological situation for many". Hopkins was horrible, but his faltering campaign only became a 'reign of terror' when Vincent Price got stuck into the role.

But the book's real problem is that the evidential link between a febrile atmosphere and witch-hunting is, like the contemporary evidence for witchcraft itself, rather circumstantial. Perhaps folk at Windsor did remember the bizarre trial of witches in Somerset in 1626 – spirits were reported to have had a conversation inside the victim's body – but then again, maybe they didn't. Witches left no smoking guns in the early modern courtroom or in the historian's study.

There are a few quibbles. Ross's archival research and secondary reading are excellent, but good scholarship is undermined by sloppiness (for which the publishers must share in the blame). The witchfinder John Stearne becomes Thomas Stearne, John Rivet is John River, and the Rev John Gaule turns into a Gaul. John Godbold, judge at the Suffolk witch-trial of 1645, is introduced as Goldbot then comes back as Goldbold. The correct form, Godbold (sometimes Godbolt), appears in the index. A check of a contemporary text (a book by Windsor's minister) reveals misquotation.

Overall, this is a valuable addition to the vast historical literature relating to witchcraft. Ross is open-minded to this story being an English one played out in America, rather than an intrinsically American affair. And he never talks down to his subjects, however peculiar their beliefs. Finally, there is something touching about the town of Windsor passing a resolution to restore the reputations of the two 'witches' it had executed, even if only in February this year. Better late than never.

A well-researched and well-written account of a forgotten witch-hunt, strong in describing a rising sense of transatlantic panic, occasionally unconvincing.

Malcolm Gaskill

★★★★☆

Eyeball Cards

The Art of British CB Radio Culture

William Hogan & David Titlow

Four Corners Books

Hb, 192pp, illus, £14.00, ISBN 9781909829084

In the late 1970s, Citizens Band (CB) radios were all the rage, but broadcasting on them was actually illegal in Britain until 1981. Because of this, CB enthusiasts – known as 'breakers' – created their own

slang and assigned code names to various locations to avoid being identified. Edinburgh became 'Castle City', while Hastings went by the name of 'Ghost Town'.

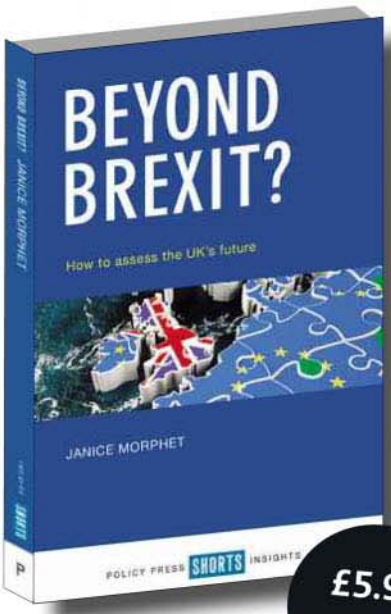
This hidden community also had its own 'underground' business cards, called Eyeball cards, many of which were festooned with drawings whose naive artwork only adds to their sense of clandestine charm. In author William Hogan's words: "Like coy swingers strolling sown a suburban drive, the pseudonyms of Eyeball cards make for an eclectic parade" – 'Star Rider', 'Magic Man', 'White Witch', 'The Hulk' and 'Frankenstein'. The cards of these and hundreds more are reproduced together for the first time, alongside recent photographs of some of the 'breakers' themselves by David Titlow.

Though not strictly fortean, *Eyeball Cards* offers a fascinating insight into the forgotten history, humour and paranoia of these covert communicators.

Etienne Gilfillan

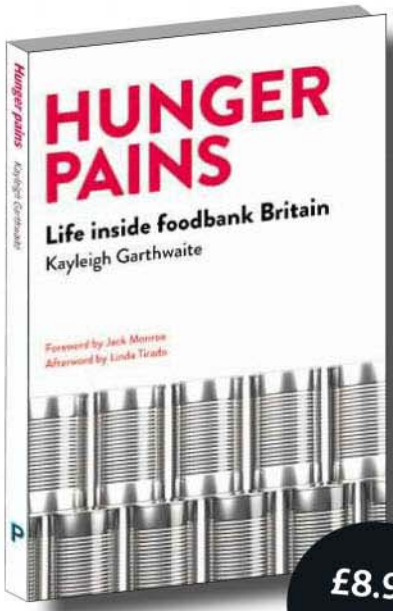
★★★★★

Essential reading from Policy Press



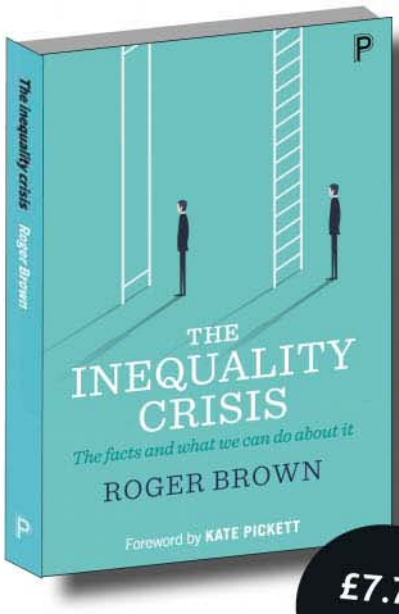
£5.99 FOR BIG ISSUE READERS*

PB £9.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3924-3
EPUB £6.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3926-7
Available on amazon kindle



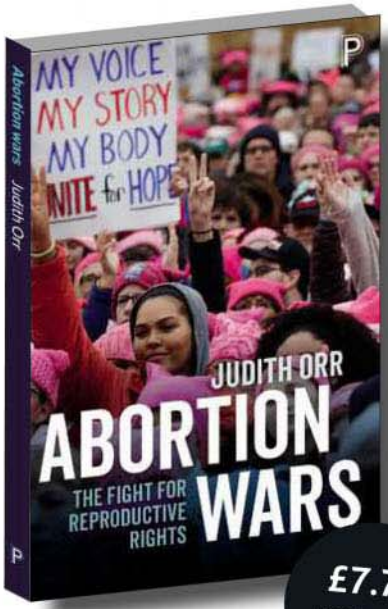
£8.99 FOR BIG ISSUE READERS*

PB £14.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2911-4
EPUB £9.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2913-8
Available on amazon kindle



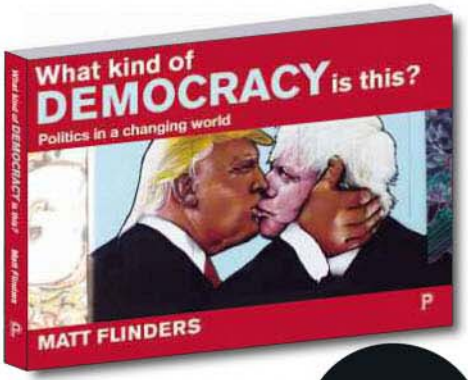
£7.79 FOR BIG ISSUE READERS*

PB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3758-4
EPUB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3760-7
Available on amazon kindle



£7.79 FOR BIG ISSUE READERS*

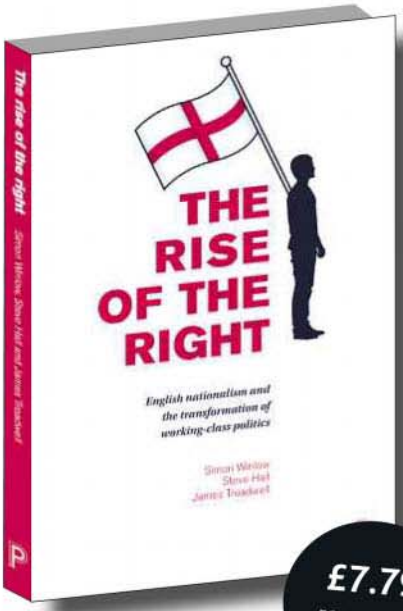
PB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3911-3
EPUB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3913-7
Available on amazon kindle



£11.99 FOR BIG ISSUE READERS*

PB £19.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3762-1
EPUB £22.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3992-2
Available on amazon kindle

"Unusual, accessible and innovative." David Blunkett



£7.79 FOR BIG ISSUE READERS*

PB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2848-3
EPUB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2851-3
Available on amazon kindle

Policy Press
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

A LEADING SOCIAL SCIENCE PUBLISHER COMMITTED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Order from www.policypress.co.uk before 30 September 17 and use code POBIG17 at the checkout

Follow us on and Sign up for our newsletter and receive 35% off all books

SEND REVIEW DISCS TO: FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD, UK.

The gods must be crazy

Handing the keys to a major Marvel project to anarchic Kiwi director Taika Waititi proves a gamble that pays off, as the latest Thor movie brings laugh-out-loud comedy to the Nine Realms and beyond

Thor: Ragnarok

Dir Taika Waititi, US 2017
On UK release from 24 Oct

Considering the number of superhero movies that we've been bombarded with in recent years, it's surprising that standards have, for the most part, remained impressively high. However, even quality can't always stave off the threat of becoming repetitive with time.

Even the mighty Marvel – which has received consistent praise for the offerings of its Marvel Cinematic Universe – has to some extent become predictable; this summer's otherwise winning *Spider-Man: Homecoming* had a final fight that felt painfully formulaic. What made the newest version of the web-slinger worthwhile was the relatability of the characters and the refreshingly knowing approach the film took.

Another Marvel property that benefited greatly from an explicitly 'meta' approach to the superhero genre was Fox's (non-MCU) *Deadpool*, and while *Thor: Ragnarok* may not be led by an R-rated motormouth like Ryan Reynolds, this latest film about the God of Thunder also delivers an incredibly enjoyable, gleefully self-mocking meta-adventure. This is not least thanks to Taika Waititi being at the helm; the eclectic Kiwi director of *What We Do in the Shadows* and *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* has already proved that he can bring his determinedly silly sense of humour to bear on very different projects – what's perhaps more surprising is the help he gets here from Marvel regulars like Mark Ruffalo, Tom Hiddlestone and Chris Hemsworth, as well as MCU newcomers like Tessa Thompson and an hilarious Jeff Goldblum.

Chris Hemsworth gets to flex his muscles and his comedic talent

Last year's *Ghostbusters* reboot proved divisive, but something that the film did make quite clear was that Chris Hemsworth has funny bones. So, while Hemsworth gets to show off his very real muscles in numerous action-packed sequences in *Ragnarok*, he also gets to flex his comedic talent, landing a constant stream of laughs that show just how perfect a fit his talent is for Waititi's trademark oddball Kiwi humour. Likewise, Hiddleston also gets to take a fresh approach to the character of Loki, his tricksterish ways becoming the source of much amusement as well as allowing Hiddleston to explore a different emotional and comedic register than in previous MCU outings featuring the God of Mischief. The self-referential aspect is further emphasised by the numerous call-backs to previous MCU films; while this sort of in-joking can become forced in other hands, Waititi once again proves that he is the perfect man for the job, as the myriad of references overwhelmingly work, ensuring that both longtime Marvel fans and casual viewers will be thoroughly entertained.

Cate Blanchett makes for a visually striking and delightfully dark villain; however, since we are continuously jumping back and forth between Asgard and the gladiatorial gaming planet of Sakaar, Blanchett's Hela is left a little too much to her own evil devices, resulting in a somewhat lacklustre character arc. What detracts from her potential impact as a villain is that the film is so focused on the humour that the drama sometimes feels like an afterthought, leaving precious little space for any sense of genuine peril. Ironically, the opposite problem was the case with Kenneth Branagh's 2011 *Thor*, where the almost Shakespearean drama unfolding in Asgard was far stronger than the less interesting events, and occasionally forced humour, of the scenes on Earth. Thus, while Waititi's *Thor: Ragnarok* is the Asgardian hero's best solo adventure to date, one wishes that the laughs and drama had been more evenly balanced, which would have made this gloriously colourful and hugely enjoyable film a truly exquisite cinematic experience.

That aside, Marvel should be congratulated for staying unapologetically true to Waititi's anarchic, humorous and heartfelt style. As a result, *Thor: Ragnarok* is a fantastically wacky and brilliantly designed ride that not only makes for one of the more memorable laugh-fests of 2017, but also places itself firmly alongside the best and most inventive of the MCU's offerings.

Leyla Mikkelsen

★★★★½

Kaleidoscope

Dir Rupert Jones, UK 2017
On UK release from 10 Nov

Having only a few short films on his resumé, director Rupert Jones takes the plunge into feature territory with a puzzling and unpredictable thriller led by Toby Jones as Carl, a quiet man who lives a modest life after having been released from prison. When he brings home a young woman he has met via online dating, things get complicated; just as a kaleidoscope changes the appearance of its patterns as you twist it, so the film changes

its perspectives on the events that unfold as it progresses. The narrative becomes increasingly non-linear as reality and the demons of past traumas increasingly blend together in Carl's mind. However, what makes *Kaleidoscope* interesting, in spite of its production being as modest as its main character, is that the surrealism remains grounded thanks to strong performances by Toby Jones and Anne Reid as Carl's overbearing mother. While the storyline is bewildering and strange, *Kaleidoscope* will appeal to those who enjoy arthouse cinema.

Leyla Mikkelsen

★★★☆☆

The Kettering Incident

Dir Rowan Woods, Australia 2016
Spirit Entertainment, £14.99 (DVD)

There's a lot of weird in *The Kettering Incident*, a compelling Aussie-noir drama. Dr Anna Macy (Elizabeth Debicki) has a crisis at her hospital in London – and the next thing she knows, she's back in the small town where she grew up in Tasmania. We discover that she's subject to nosebleeds, migraines and blackouts, finding herself somewhere else with no recollection of how she got there.

She meets with an unfriendly welcome in Kettering, a small town on the south-east coast. Years earlier, when she was a teenager, she and her best friend Gillian were cycling in the woods; they heard strange sounds, saw lights in the sky and went to investigate. Anna was found hours later, covered in blood, on her own; Gillian was never seen again. That's the Kettering Incident of the title; a café in the town sells Kettering Incident snow-globes. Years on, many are still suspicious of Anna – and angry because she went away. Now they're angry because she's come back.

Shortly after her arrival Anna goes to a party in the woods and makes friends with student Chloe; with strange sounds and lights in the sky, Chloe disappears, bringing Anna under suspicion again.

The search for Chloe begins, but it's problematic. The town's men are divided between the local logging industry and the Greenies, an environmentalist protest group; both appear hard and aggressive, the Aussie macho stereotype. There are personal tensions both within and between different families, and the police seem divided amongst themselves. The local force has two detectives; Fergus (Henry Nixon) is gentle and friendly to everyone, including Anna; Dutch (Matthew le Nevez) is intimidating and seems to be trafficking drugs with local teenagers. The situation is complicated by Anna's father being the recently-retired senior detective – and he's in cahoots with a couple of other older men in the town, who hold a secret about something perhaps buried in the woods years ago.

And then things get weirder! There are huge moths and invasive vegetation. Anna discovers that a number of people, including herself, have an unusual blood disorder, which is being covered up by the local doctor. A fingerprint at a crime-scene matches an Antarctic scientist who disappeared 20 years ago. Then there are the night-vision goggles, which seem to show people moving around in an alternate reality. Or Mother Sullivan's Ridge, where no one ever goes.

Comparisons with both *The X-Files* and *Twin Peaks* are inevitable. By the time we reach the final episode (no spoilers!) the strange events begin to get some even stranger explanations, leading to more questions than answers and enough loose ends for a possible second season.

The large cast can be a bit confusing at times, but the main characters are well-drawn and thoroughly three-dimensional. The striking 6 ft 2in Elizabeth Debicki is cool, troubled and compelling; she first came to prominence in the BBC series *The Night Manager*, but this is her first major lead role.

The Kettering Incident is apparently the first adult TV drama to have come out of Tasmania – and it was inspired by real-life Kettering incidents: a UFO sighting in 1976 and the disappearance of a light aircraft in 1978; the young pilot's last words were: "That strange aircraft is hovering on top of me again. It... is hovering and it's not an aircraft." The series was filmed entirely on location, and takes full advantage of the stunning scenery.

David V Barrett

★★★★☆

SHORTS

NAILS

Kaleidoscope Home Entertainment, £9.99 (DVD)

There have been some good Irish horror productions over the last few years, but I'm afraid *Nails* isn't one of them. Dana (Shauna Macdonald from *The Descent* and *Howl*) is a fitness freak who, while out jogging one morning, is involved in an horrific hit-and-run and awakens some days later to find herself in hospital, hooked up to a ventilator. As the seemingly endless days and nights of her recovery go by, she comes to believe that she is being watched, and subsequently visited, by a ghostly presence. No one believes her, except perhaps kindly nurse Trevor (stand-up comedian and occasional horror star Ross Noble). Armed only with a laptop, Dana resolves to get to the bottom of the mystery, even if it places her in mortal danger. Sound corny? It is, offering nothing the genre fan won't have seen many times before. The story is all too familiar, the acting overwrought and the direction reliant on clichés; it doesn't even offer buckets of blood, which for a hospital-set horror movie is unforgivable. The monster's USP – trimming the fingernails of his victims – is so lame it barely registers. **Daniel King** ★★☆☆☆

PULSE

Arrow Video, £12.99 (Dual format)

A student working on a mysterious computer disk suddenly commits suicide, drawing his friends into an ever-widening circle of terror and death in this 2001 Japanese techno-horror. In some ways, it's very much a film of its time; screeching modem, Internet set-up CDs and the chunky PC monitors anchor the film firmly to its era. Beyond these trappings, though, there is something which feels solidly timeless, a commentary on the way in which man's reliance on and relationship with technology can quickly become deadly. There is a mounting sense of dread, masterfully maintained by writer/director Kiyoshi Kurosawa. "Something is definitely not right" says one character early on, setting the tone for the events to follow. "Would you like to meet a ghost?" asks a message attached to some seriously creepy video footage. Well, you don't really get the choice. The ghost is in the machine, but even turning the machine off won't help. Kurosawa avoids easy jump scares and special effects, favouring instead long, slow takes where apparitions move slowly but inexorably towards terrified witnesses. It loses momentum in its final act, where the ghosts become more solid and the plot more threadbare, but the satisfyingly bizarre atmosphere Kurosawa has created carries it through to its bleak conclusion. **Martin Parsons** ★★★★☆

IN MY MIND

Neywork Releasing, £14.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

In this odd palimpsest of a documentary we retrace the story of how fledgling director Chris Rodley tried, back in 1983, to make a TV film about Patrick McGoohan and *The Prisoner*. The notoriously reticent McGoohan led Rodley and his inexperienced crew a merry dance around Santa Monica, where he ended up meeting them for an interview in a mysteriously empty house and took over the director's role. Days later, he first offered to buy back the footage they had shot, and then decided they should film the whole thing again, this time in Laurel Canyon. After Rodley returned to the UK, McGoohan sent him a completely new film he had made himself with instructions that Channel 4 should broadcast this instead of Rodley's film, *Six Into One*. *In My Mind*, then, tells both the story of how McGoohan came to make *The Prisoner* and of Rodley's previous attempts to make a film about *The Prisoner*. Fascinating (and previously unseen) though some of this material is, there are no great revelations here. We already knew that the uncompromising McGoohan *was* Number Six, but that getting him to open up was never easy. **David Sutton** ★★★☆☆

SOUNDS PECULIAR

BRIAN J ROBB PRESENTS THE FORTEAN TIMES PODCAST COLUMN

As a medium, podcasts have been enjoying something of a boom over the past few years. The democratisation of quality media production through high-specification computer equipment has allowed a plethora of previously marginalised voices their own access to what were once quaintly called 'the airwaves'.

In the past, broadcasting (reaching a wide audience from a single source) was heavily regulated and controlled, mainly through frequency scarcity: only those authorised or licensed to have access to the airwaves were allowed to broadcast. In UK terms that, initially, meant the BBC, with commercial stations coming along in the 1960s.

In terms of radio, there have been amateurs since the invention of the medium, reaching a crescendo with the offshore 'pirate' pop stations of the 1960s that ultimately led to the BBC launching Radio 1. For the longest time, Radio 4 (or NPR in the US) has been the default home of quality 'spoken word' content, whether that was drama, current affairs, or documentary radio.

Now, anyone with a microphone and an iPad, laptop, or computer and the right software can produce a decent podcast and launch their work onto a waiting world. Not all of them are good, while many are far better than you might expect, sometimes surpassing the productions of 'legitimate' broadcasters like the BBC or NPR. When it comes to fortean topics, there are a host of podcasts out there, ranging from the polished and compelling to the amateurish and downright weird. SOUNDS PECULIAR is your insider guide to the best of the current podcasts dealing with fortean topics: all you have to do is sit back and listen...

Podcast: The Lone Gunman / The Dallas Action
www.spreaker.com/user/thelonegunman / http://www.spreaker.com/user/7338953
Host: Rob Clarke / Doug Jones
Episode Count: 138 / 114
Format: Single presenter, interviews, discussion
Established: 2014 / 2013
Frequency: Weekly
Topics: JFK assassination, conspiracy

The assassination of President John F Kennedy in 1963 by 'lone gunman' Lee Harvey Oswald is still a lively topic amid conspiracy-minded groups, and those who continue to question the 'official' history of this earth-shattering event. Many fortean-focused podcasts have devoted an episode or two to the JFK assassination, often around anniversaries or due to the (infrequent) release of new information or declassified documents. There are, though, a handful of long-running podcasts devoted solely to the JFK assassination.

Two of the most interesting are part of the self-declared '22 November Network' (https://22novembernetwork.wordpress.com) which claims to be "the voice of the grassroots JFK research community". It's a rather scrappy blog site, but it's home to both *The Lone Gunman* and *The Dallas Action* podcasts, two in-depth series on the JFK assassination that take differing views on key subjects.

Don't go into either expecting BBC Radio 4 style production values. Rob Clarke presents his *Lone Gunman* podcast (recently concluded after 138 episodes) as the investigations of an amateur with a deep interest in everything surrounding the assassination. Clarke's initial instalments were basic, with him chatting stream-of-consciousness style about anything that seemed to come into his mind concerning JFK and the various assassination conspiracy theories. Across the run of the shows, which spanned three years, Clarke gets more comfortable with podcasting, improves his presentation, both technically and in terms of organising his material, and branches out to conduct various interviews and discussions with other JFK researchers.

Topics covered include the vexed question of the so-called 'Oswald doubles', the tangled New Orleans connections of various players, Jack Ruby and his links to the Mob, the role of officer JD Tippit, Oswald's Mexico period, and the question of whether subsequent President Lyndon Baines Johnson was behind the assassination, among many, many other subjects.

Although he sometimes ties himself in knots, Clarke's low-key approach to this material makes it easily accessible to those with a casual interest as well as listeners who may have spent a fair amount of time deep in JFK conspiracy territory. Episode lengths range from about 30 minutes (in the beginning) to over two hours for some of the interview/discussion-based episodes).

Coming in at about 45 minutes almost every episode (at least to begin with; some later episodes expand to 90-120 minutes or more), *The Dallas Action* is a rather more strident beast. Doug Jones is a louder, more aggressive presence than Clarke (the pair know each other through their shared JFK obsession, and have guested on each other's podcasts). Jones, however, knows when to shut up and let his guests talk, and he gets good value from some of the contributors to the podcast, giving them the time and space to outline their theories and explore some of the more outré areas of the conspiracy world as it relates to JFK.

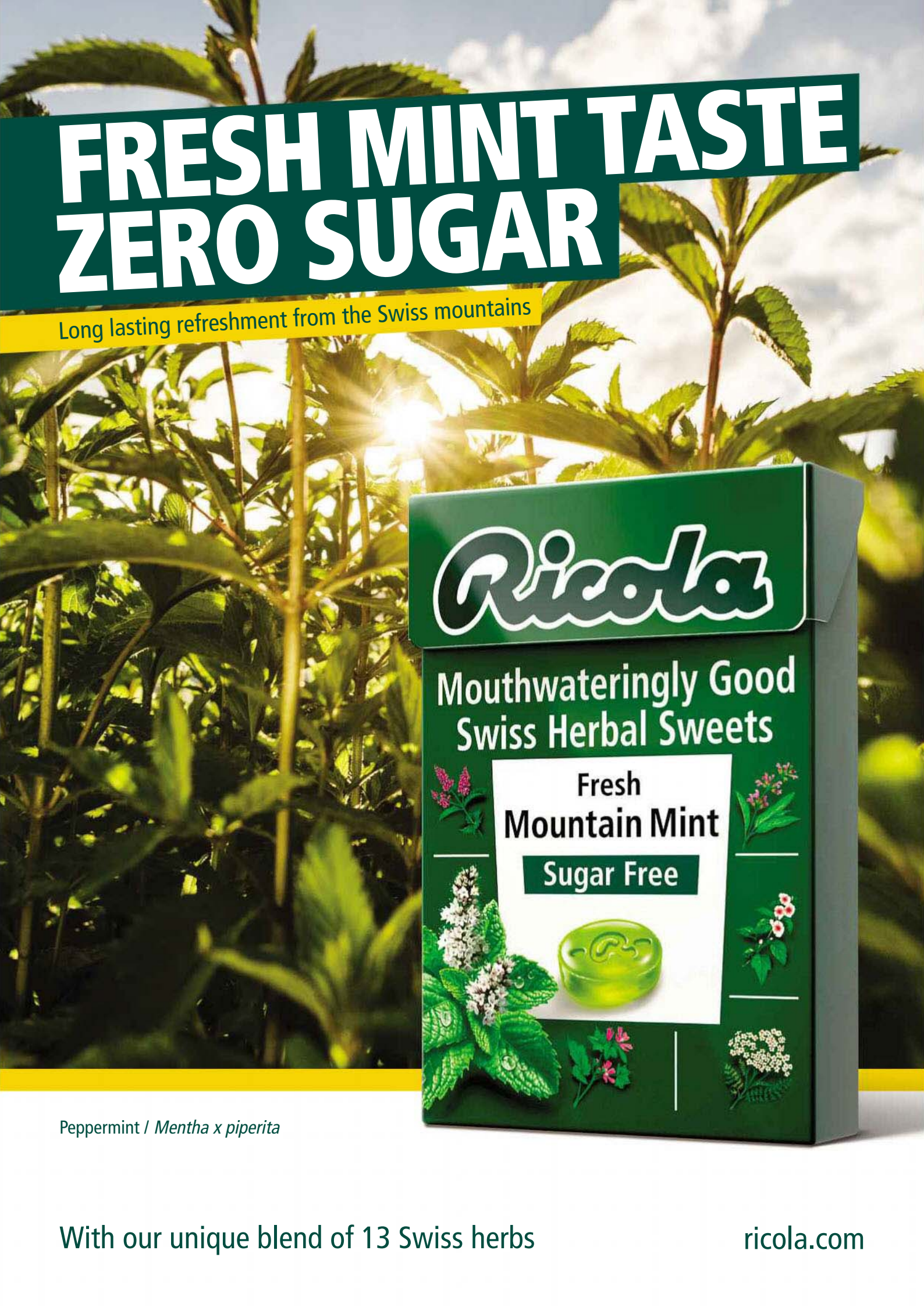
Just like *The Lone Gunman*, *The Dallas Action* covers all the basics, hitting many of the same subjects, but often from a slightly different angle (despite their friendship, Clarke and Jones do not agree on every aspect of the JFK allegations). However, both offer an accessible window on the sometimes complicated and definitely tangled world of JFK assassination speculation.

Strengths: An accessible presentation style on both podcasts welcomes listeners, and a wide range of topics are covered – which might make up for their sometimes rough and ready presentation.

Weaknesses: Both podcasts can sometimes be rather disorganised, digressive, and undisciplined; some listeners might find this enjoyable, whereas others might be put off by the occasional lack of focus on the topic at hand.

Recommended Episodes: The Lone Gunman: Ep8 The Bishops of New Orleans; Ep19 Mobbed Up Ruby; Ep26 Stealing the Body; Ep49 The Evidence is the Conspiracy. The Dallas Action: Ep74 Guy Bannister; Ep96 Access Denied – The List of Still-Classified JFK Assassination Records; Ep105 Damage Control – The CIA and the Warren Report; Ep109 Jack Ruby & Lee Oswald

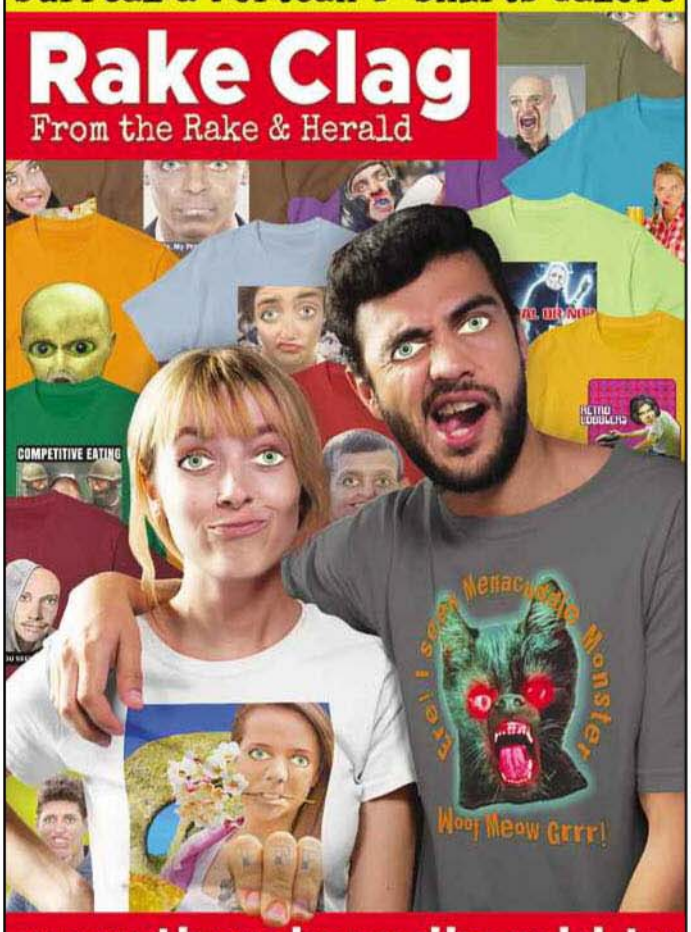
Verdict: Sometimes as infuriating as they can be entertaining and informative, both *The Lone Gunman* and *The Dallas Action* podcasts show that the investigation into the JFK assassination is still as lively as ever.


FRESH MINT TASTE
ZERO SUGAR
Long lasting refreshment from the Swiss mountains
Ricola
Mouthwateringly Good
Swiss Herbal Sweets
Fresh
Mountain Mint
Sugar Free
Peppermint / *Mentha x piperita*
With our unique blend of 13 Swiss herbs
ricola.com

Surreal & Fortean T-Shirts Galore

Rake Clag

From the Rake & Herald



www.therakeandherald.tv

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

FortеanTimes

To advertise here plase email

imogen_williams@dennis.co.uk

or call 0203 890 37 39

URGENT APPEAL TO SAVE LIVES

We face daily horrors in our work to save stray animals in Sri Lanka. Prince was found by some tourists. He had an horrific, foul smelling, maggot infested neck wound and was near to death when he arrived at our sanctuary. We saved his life along with 1000's of other desperate animals that we give a lifeline to. Without us, they are doomed. Prince lives at our sanctuary along with many other rescues that have suffered so greatly on the streets. Animal SOS Sri Lanka is a UK Registered Charity and we need your support NOW so we can continue saving lives.

Please save a life today by donating

PLEASE HELP US TO CONTINUE GIVING THESE ANIMALS A FUTURE BY DONATING TODAY. *There is no greater gift*

I enclose ○ £100 ○ £50 ○ £25 ○ Other £

Mr/Mrs/Ms.

First Name.....Surname.....

Address.....

.....

Email.....

Give more at no extra cost to you:

○ GIFT AID. I would like Animal SOS Sri Lanka to reclaim tax on this & all future donations until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer & that I pay as much income or capital gains as Animal SOS Sri Lanka will reclaim in the tax year (currently 25p in every £1 donated.)

Signature..... Date.....

Please make cheques payable to: Animal SOS Sri Lanka. Post to: 12 Cheyne Avenue, South Woodford, London E18 2DR
Or make a secure donation online **www.animalsos-sl.com {E} info@animalsos-sl.com {T) 07773 746108** *thank you!*

THE ULTIMATE LEATHER CD/DVD ORGANISER!

Keep 5 times more in the same space!

ARCHIVAL PVC FREE PREVENTS CD-ROT

Stunning Limited Offer

£23.95*

Normally ~~£45.34~~

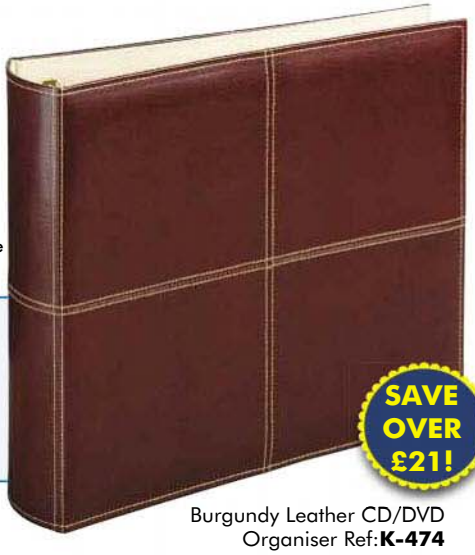
Please quote promotional code **FTM1117** on your basket page

Transform your Collection...

From This

To This

...and Maximise CD Life



SAVE OVER £21!

Burgundy Leather CD/DVD Organiser Ref:**K-474**

The Professionals Choice
Photos, Memorabilia & Collectables

Is Your Collection Getting Out of Hand?

- One Space Saving CD/DVD Organiser Stores up to 120 Discs
- Find your favourite group/artist or track in seconds
- Protect your discs from dust, dirt, light and scratches
- Match your CD/DVDs with their booklet covers

Protect and Organise your collection, NOW at this special low cut price!

TO CLAIM THIS SPECIAL OFFER PLEASE USE PROMO CODE: FTM1117

Extra refill sleeve pages RJ0CD44 (pk of 10) £10.95 | Additional Album PLUS FREE Slipcase K-475 £23.95 | Each album will hold up to 60 CDs with 60 covers or 120 CDs without covers Album Size: 292mm x 337mm x 75mm | Total Album Capacity: 15 Sleeve Pages | Terms & Conditions: *Please note normal P&P applies £5.95 | Offer limited to one album per household | For overseas orders and non-mainland UK delivery please ring +44(0)1904 202150

This Amazing Offer Includes:

Binder Album £23.95

10 Black Refill Pages ~~£10.95~~

Music Labels ~~£3.25~~

Pack of CD Index Sheets and Dividers ~~£6.20~~

Page Numbers ~~£0.99~~

FREEPHONE 0800 027 0636
For Special Offer quote code: **FTM1117**

MONEY BACK 100% GUARANTEE

Order Online - WWW.ARROWFILE.COM/CDOFFER23
and ADD **FTM1117** in the promotion code box in your basket

PROTECT, ORGANISE AND DISPLAY

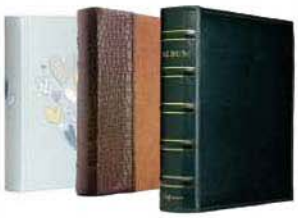
FLEXIBLE ARCHIVAL STORAGE AND PRESENTATION SOLUTIONS

arrowfile
The Collectable Storage Specialists

Suppliers to photographers, photographic and family history societies, schools, medical establishments, museums, businesses, as well as collectors, hobbyists and musicians.

Binder Albums with slipcases including Family History

Portfolios Ring Binders,Presenters, Cases & Archival Refill Sleeves



Digital Photo Slip-In Albums - 6x4", 6x4.5", 7x5", 8x6" & more -

Traditional Photoboard including Wedding Themed Albums

Pocket Refill Sleeves - Slides, Docs, Postcards, Photos, Stamps etc.

Stamp and Coin Storage - Binders, Sheets, Cases, Drawers

Photo Frames - Wood, Bronze, Metal etc!

Display Presentation Cabinets and Cases

Archival Storage Boxes, Binder Files PLUS Indexing and Dividers

Viewing and Scanning Equipment

Photographic Accessories including Negative bags

CD/DVD Organisers, Zipper Wallets and Portfolios

Protective Sleeves and Covers for 7", 10" & 12" Vinyl Records

Vinyl Record Storage Cases

Digital Convertors & Players for Records

SPECIAL READER OFFER - 10% OFF all Arrowfile Storage Products until 31 Dec 2017 - †Use Promo Code: FTMDIS17

Flash Foto Ltd T/A Arrowfile, 147 Churchill House, Stirling Way, WD6 2HP Reg No. 1561035

The simple way to buy a car

Buy online and we do the hard work for you

Excellent monthly finance packages available

You buy online - selecting from over 40,000 used cars nationwide

We inspect the car and supplying dealer for price and quality

We deliver the car to your door with a 14-day money-back guarantee

buyacar.co.uk

SEE OUR REVIEWS ON TRUSTPILOT

"Amazing! They are with you every step"
★★★★★
Lisa, 21 October

"Very impressed and was smooth and hassle free from start to finish"
★★★★★
David, 9 September

"Thank you and we would buy through you again"
★★★★★
Clancy, 21 August

"I'm loving my new ride. I would recommend this service to anyone"
★★★★★
Tatiana, 8 September

Dennis Buyacar Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1T 4JD (GB09151058) (FRN:667368) Is Authorised And Regulated By The Financial Conduct Authority. Buyacar is an independent credit broker and not a lender

LETTERS

CONTACT US BY POST: BOX 2409 LONDON NW5 4NP OR E-MAIL SIEVEKING@FORTEANTIMES.COM
PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS

Phantom hitchhikers

In his 'Ghostwatch' column [**FT358:18-20**], Alan Murdie asserts that "first-hand witnesses to the [phantom] hitchhiker and verifiable details *always* prove lacking" (p.19; my emphasis). Leaving aside the question of what would constitute "verifiable details", there certainly *are* first-hand reports of phantom hitchhiker experiences. Take, for example, the following cases:

Michael Goss, author of a well-known book on phantom hitchhikers, interviewed a man called Roy Fulton, who had reportedly encountered a phantom hitchhiker one evening in October 1979 while driving home from a darts match (*The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers*, Aquarian Press, 1984, p.11 and pp.90-99.) On a road near the village of Stanbridge, Bedfordshire, Fulton saw a male figure thumbing a lift. He stopped his van, and the hitchhiker got in. Fulton asked the man where he was going, but he simply pointed ahead. Fulton surmised that the passenger might have been deaf and dumb. A few minutes later, Fulton turned to offer him a cigarette, but there was no one there.

In a recently published, and very detailed, book on the ghostly phenomena at Blue Bell Hill, north Kent, Sean Tudor cites an experience that reportedly befell a Malcolm Grant (pseudonym) and his then girlfriend in about 1967 or 1968 (*The Ghosts of Blue Bell Hill & other Road Ghosts,* White Ladies Press, 2017, pp.217-218.) Years later, Tudor got to speak to Grant briefly about the incident, which occurred when Grant and his friend were on Blue Bell Hill and driving in the direction of Maidstone. A young woman flagged them down. Grant stopped to offer her a lift, and she got into the back of the vehicle. However, when Grant turned to ask her where she wanted to go, there was no sign of her.

Peter A McCue
By email

Corrupted image

Re 'In Front of your Eyes' [**FT358:75**]: yes, when searching for something it would be helpful to keep an image of the object in mind – but what if, as my partner and I have experienced from time to time, the image has somehow become 'corrupted'? Half hours are wasted looking for a recently arrived buff envelope or pink leaflet. Both are overlooked in the piles of papers because, it turns out, they are white or yellow. Even then I can't quite accept my image was 'wrong', and I ascribe it to the malice of inanimate objects. Sometimes even the size of the envelope appears to have transmuted, larger or smaller.

E Beckett
London

SIMULACRA CORNER

Ecclesall iguana

Graham Roos was walking in Ecclesall Woods in Sheffield last March when he spotted this… iguana?

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.

Salve!

Bob Rickard's article 'Robert Boyle and the Invisible College' [**FT357:44-50**] highlighted two related but distinct kinds of sympathetic magic. In one kind, treating the weapon that caused an injury was thought to heal the injury. This practice features in John Dryden's version of *The Tempest* first performed in 1667, where Ariel describes how to treat a sword wound received by Hippolito ('Anoint the Sword which pierc'd him with this Weapon-Salve, and wrap it close from air till I have time to visit him again').

In the second kind, it is the injury that is treated with the weapon that caused it, illustrated by the case of Telephus who was healed when pieces of the spear that injured him were scraped off into his wound. If either of these 'alternative treatments' seems a little far-fetched, there is also a pamphlet published in 1687, which may or not be satirical in intent, that suggests using the powder of sympathy as an aid to maritime navigation. A vessel is put to sea with a wounded dog on board. Back on shore someone armed with an accurate clock and a bandage from the injured dog dips the bandage in a solution of the powder at a predetermined time, causing the dog on the ship to bark and thereby letting those on board know the hour. [See 'The Powder of Sympathy' by William and John Sutton, **FT198:42-46**, July 2005.]

Martin Stubbs
London

Secret societies

Re the works mentioned in "Help! Help! The paranoids are after me!" [*Building a fortean library*, **FT357:52**], I would add *The Mythology of the Secret Societies* (1972) by John Roberts, which is in a similar vein and robustly researched. This traces the public belief in plotters and conspirators in Europe through the 18th and 19th centuries – and indeed demonstrates there is nothing new under the Sun.

AR Craig
Co. Armagh, Northern Ireland

Canine perception

Mythconception #215 states that canine eyes cannot be trained to read traffic lights [**FT357:21**]; but I beg to differ. Whilst in Barcelona a couple of years ago, we were waiting to cross a road. There was an unaccompanied Labrador dog on the opposite pavement, also waiting to cross, and it appeared to be watching the lights on our side. When the lights changed and the green man symbol appeared, the dog immediately crossed the road and continued on its way. As far as I remember, the symbol was not accompanied by the beeping sound we have in the UK.

Alan Vickers
By email

The term UFO

I had always thought that the term Unidentified Flying Object had come into use in the late 1940s or 1950s, but when recently watching a cartoon with my five-year-old daughter I seem to have found an earlier usage. In the 1942 cartoon *A Tale of Two Kitties* (first appearance of Tweety Pie and featuring Abbot and Costello type cats) Tweety at one point puts on an air raid warden helmet and phones in to report an "Unidentified object flying awound my wittle head". It seems that the UFO term originates from WW2 aircraft spotting.

Adam Caudill
Whiston, Merseyside

LETTERS

Not identical

In David Clarke's report on a UFO seen by numerous schoolchildren over Rhosybol School in February 1977 [**FT357:16-17**], he writes: "The letter [to the Commanding Officer at RAF Valley in North Wales] endorsed by her teacher, arrived with a collection of drawings showing an identical flying saucer, produced by her school pals...". While I don't doubt that they saw an object of some kind, I cannot agree with the word "identical". The drawings show a cone-shaped object, a flat saucer, a bowl with a sharp point on top, a bowl with a smooth hump, and a squashed onion shape. One is apparently upside-down. In my opinion, this shows how the visual impression of an object must traverse not only our eyes and visual cortex, but also social and cultural filters, modifying our expectations. It also demonstrates the difficulty of obtaining unbiased data from a sighting made by only one person.

Bill Robinson
Slough, Berkshire

Spinning Moon

I wonder if anyone else saw what my school friend Jay and I saw back in April 1964. We were coming home from school, so it was after 4pm. The full Moon was in the sky in front of us and we both saw it *spinning around*! It did so for a few minutes and then stopped. At the time we lived in Edmonton, north London. I still can't understand it.

Mrs Gillian Woodward
Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex

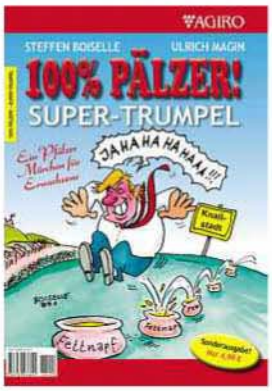
Disgusted of Jesmond

Back in the early 1970s we certainly enjoyed a flirtation with androgynous, gender-bending (as we might have said then) clothes and hairstyles, but one of your captions has taken this concept a mite too far. Steve Toase's article "Hell on Wheels" is illustrated with a still from the 1973 film *Psychomania*, which shows George Sanders demonstrating something jolly mystical to two young persons [**FT358:38**]. The one on the right (wearing the flowered blouse) is, as you rightly state, actress Mary Larkin in the role of Abby. The attractive young woman on the left, however, really can't be identified as Nicky Henson playing Tom, the troubled hero of the movie. I suspect she may be Ann Michelle, perhaps best known for her appearance in another horror film of this era, *Virgin Witch*, where she starred alongside her sister Vicki Michelle. This 1971 cult classic, directed by Ray Austin, was notorious at the time for its problems with the BBFC. Anyone who has seen it will be left in little doubt as to whether Ms Michelle could ever have been mistaken for a bloke.

Gail-Nina Anderson
Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Palatinate names

In case some people don't know: it is not true that Donald Trump's real name is Drumpf, as the late great Heathcote Williams amusingly wrote [**FT358:28**]. Already the people who sailed from Germany to the US and became his ancestors bore the same name as the US President. They came from Kallstadt in the Palatinate. There are only some 1,200 people living in Kallstadt today, and most have either the surname Trump or Heinz, as it is not only the ancestral home of the Donald, but also of the Heinz ketchup dynasty. Why two such eminent American families should have come from the same small village in Germany is a fortean mystery in itself!



Being a fellow-Palatine to Trump, I took the liberty to write his unofficial, and clearly fake, biography: *Der Super-Trumpel*, illustrated by cartoonist Steffen Boiselle, and published this spring (see cover). It has a happy ending when Trump, annoyed by all the people who cannot perceive his greatness, tears himself into pieces like Rumplestiltskin.

Ulrich Magin
Hennef, Germany

A word of caution

Regarding Bob Rickard's article on the fairy abduction of Dr Moore in 1678 [**FT351:40-46**], I'm inclined to the opinion that the whole thing was fiction. These "strange news" broadsheets from the 17th century are often unreliable sources. They were printed to make money, not to be a journal of record. Unless the story is confirmed by other sources, preferably local, one must be sceptical. As to the text not being the intricate production of "the storyteller's art", these broadsheets never are; the production is fairly crude. All that mattered was to bring in the punters. The elapsed time between events and publication is also irrelevant if the whole story is fictitious.

Similar caution is needed regarding accounts of unusual events in early newspapers. In the days before press agencies and telecommunications, it could often happen to a newspaper editor that he did not have enough news to fill his pages. The easiest solution was to make something up. Since it would be dangerous to invent a story about leading or local figures, these made-up items (the phrase "fake news" is over-used of late) tended to be of strange events (to make them interesting) and located in distant places (or readers would detect the imposture).

The historian, therefore, tends to distrust sources written a long distance from the events described. An Irish account of Dr Moore's adventures would be worth a lot more than one published in London. A friend of mine in Brazil recently sent me a photocopy of an item in a late-19th century Brazilian newspaper describing an event in Scotland. Comparing local sources, one could see that the Brazilian paper got the date wrong and greatly exaggerated every detail. If the Brazilian paper was all one had to work from, one would arrive at totally erroneous conclusions.

Roger Musson
Edinburgh

Ladies of the Night

Following the appeal for more stories involving road-ghosts and motorcycles in relation to Rob Gandy's article "Uneasy riders" [**FT358:42-47**], here's one in which the ghost appears to merge into one of the White Lady-type entities mentioned by Alan Murdie [**FT358:18-20**].

There are tales on Merseyside of the White Lady of Willow Park, on the outer edges of Newton-le-Willows. A local legend invented to justify her presence has it that she was a local lass named Lizzie who drowned herself in nearby Newton Lake after being jilted by her lover. There are many variants of the story, but all end up with her being wronged in love;

"Nah, it's just another mainstream media hoax

JORODO

as such, when her ghost appears to a man, she is supposed to be seeking a kind of generalised revenge on behalf of the fairer sex. The Willow Park area is a natural valley in which mists frequently occur, perhaps accounting for some sightings of Lizzie.

Ever since the M6 motorway was ploughed through the vicinity, however, accounts of the White Lady attacking male motorists have begun to circulate, some of which were apparently reported in local newspapers as being actual, first-hand occurrences (although as Gandy notes, this doesn't always mean they genuinely are such). In November 1989, for example, Lizzie was meant to have been seen hovering over the motorway, causing cars to swerve in panic, with one man claiming to have actually crashed his vehicle in consequence. More pertinently, in August 1972 a male motorcyclist passing by Newton Lake said the White Lady drifted in front of him, grabbed him by the neck and threw him and his bike to the ground. Reputedly, he ran away to the nearest police station – he must have been a trained marathon-runner – and refused to return to the scene to retrieve his bike until he got a police escort to protect him from Lizzie's wrath.

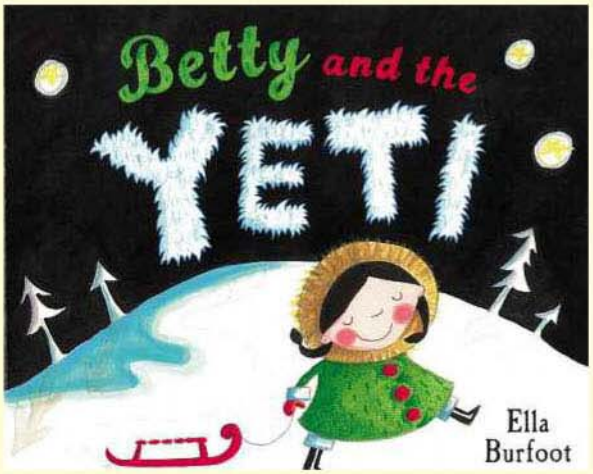
I have no idea of the truth of these stories – I haven't tried to track down the alleged newspaper reports of such incidents, and the dates given for them can vary between sources, occasionally implying they peaked *before* the M6's construction – but the legend of the White Lady assaulting motorists and bikers is certainly current in the area. Indeed, I may have helped add to its currency by writing about it in my 2013 book *Paranormal Merseyside* (pp.135–45), where it is noted that many of Merseyside's White Ladies have now seemingly abandoned their old haunts of stately homes, lakes and parklands and seeped out onto nearby lanes and motorways in the form of female road-ghosts and phantom hitchhikers.

Why might this be? One answer could be to bring in the Jungian ideas mentioned by Murdie, implying they are symbolic manifestations of the collective unconscious. If so, what are they trying to say? My own guess was that maybe they were generic Jungian female representations, updated for the modern age: "Possibly apparitional symbols of wronged femininity no longer tend to be seen in manor houses because these are now no longer the homes of people who were once in such a good position to mistreat women," I wrote.

Female hitchhikers are easily raped and killed nowadays, however, and so, "reflecting more modern anxieties and concerns, these walking symbols now appear on our roads instead." Alternatively, I propose these ghosts could be personifications of Mother Nature, "another archetypal female figure that has been metaphorically raped by mankind." Since the creation of the M6, "The White Lady here is no longer generally seen mourning by [Newton Lake] as she once was, but, rather, assaulting men on noisy motorbikes who speed through the place, helping to ruin the environment." Even if the stories themselves should prove apocryphal, this may be the basic folk-message encoded within them.

SD Tucker
Widnes, Cheshire

MISSION: BEAM 'EM UP BEAR!
Security breach! Suspicious activity has been spotted around Area 51's secret research facility. M.O.B's craftiest villain is trying to get her paws on secret tapes scientists say have recorded aliens chatting 22 miles above Earth. Beam those baddies up!
FACT FILE
Area 51 is the most secret place in the USA. Some people say that there are aliens and UFOs inside it! Wouldn't it be cool to meet our neighbours from space?
USA
Nevada, USA
TOP SECRET MESSAGE
Crack the secret code with your spy glass
How to get one
BEAR'S SPY ADVENTURE
MISSION-O-METER
Danger 10
Difficulty 10
Adventure 8
Secrecy 10
Disguise +
SPY SCORE: 42
EXPERT
PRO
ROOKIE



Fortean trading cards

A company called "Bear" (http://www.bearnibbles.co.uk/) sells a line of fruit snacks for children, and for some years offered a free trading card in each pack. The theme of the current series of cards is the world of spies and missions (http://www.bearcards.co.uk/secretspy), and I have just spotted an "Area 51" card in my daughter's ever-growing pile of these cards. Note the green alien, hiding behind the kennel-shaped building, top right. I also saw a book called "Betty and the Yeti", as another example of forteana for children.

It's interesting to see more references to UFOs, aliens and/or fortean subjects appearing in a format aimed at children, something which I don't remember ever seeing myself when I was a child. This "Junior Forteana" reminds me of a letter in FT long ago below a photo of a young girl cuddling an inflatable "Grey" alien, with a comment from her father about it being her favourite toy and sleeping with it every night. I don't necessarily hold to the theory that this sort of thing is a New World Order method of making extraterrestrial life appear more benign or friendly, ready for our forthcoming "assimilation" by the Greys, but when every alien in a flying saucer is shown as cute, loveable or harmless in the latest crop of kid's cartoons that I am forced to watch by the same daughter, it does give pause for thought…

James Watson
Chelmsford, Essex

LETTERS

Bikers

In reference to the biker articles: It's not really surprising that Rob Gandy [**FT358:42-47**] should come across few hitchhiker-type ghost stories in connection with motorcycles. In practical terms a hiker who wants a ride in a nice comfy sitting room on wheels is unlikely to want to spend time on a bike looking at the back of a crash helmet, and I guess most bikers will assume that hitch-hikers would rather ride in a car. From the biker's point of view an inexperienced or a nervous and fidgety pillion rider is a danger, so any stories, as the 'Uneasy Riders' article seems to bear out, would likely be limited to the picking up of stranded or broken-down bikers who know the score and are properly equipped for riding. I've done this myself once or twice in the past, obeying the protocol that you should always stop for a stranded biker, but in these days of mobile phones and insurance policies that include breakdown recovery I suspect that even this courtesy is rarer than it once was. On Rob's final thought that "motorcyclists' senses will be constrained by their helmets" I would say, "You'd be surprised". When your life depends on your senses to such a high degree, it's amazing how you train your awareness. What I make of such tales is just that; they are tales long told and altered, passed on with any true facts forgotten. Stories are one of the ways in which a subculture defines itself and the factual veracity of the tale is less important than what it says about the lifestyle.

Such ghost stories that I've heard tend to relate to daredevils who push their luck too far, or heroes of the road snuffed out by a truck driver who pulled out without looking. I suspect that both these dangers are too real and too immediate to be made into stories by bikers themselves – look at any club website and you'll see links to those "gone but not forgotten". I've heard a couple of deals-with-the-devil type tales, the rider(s) signing up for immortality until the time comes for their souls to be

claimed, and I seem to remember a couple of stories of this type appearing in *Bike* magazine, most likely written by its then editor Mark Williams.

The article 'Hell on Wheels' [**FT358:34-40**] was also interesting, though barely scratching the surface of a big subject. It was no surprise that Steve Toase began with Hollister, though I suspect that this incident has been done to death and there's little of real interest to be had from it; the notion of the outlaw biker and the one percenter would have emerged anyway. More important was the film, but it's significant that bikers generally identify with the character Chino played by Lee Marvin (apparently based on Wino Willie of the Booze Fighters) rather than Johnny as played by Brando, though the skull design on the jackets of the BRMC was supposedly adapted and used by the Outlaws in Illinois who were documented Thompson-style by photographer Danny Lyon in the mid-Sixties.

I'd almost forgotten *Psychomania*, a great film to watch late at night when drunk or (ahem) stoned, though in the spirit of friendly pedantry that is often found in your letters column I will point out that not all the gang drive off the bridge. One jumps out of the window of his high-rise flat when a couple of coppers tell him to come down and another, who seems to be in the Territorials, jumps out of a military plane and doesn't bother to open his 'chute.

It was fun to be reminded about the NEL pulp novels that were doing the rounds when I was still at school, but it would have been good to link these influences, the books and films, with actual occult stories or incidents. The most horrible connection is probably that of the Californian club called the Straight Satans, who spent time at Spahn Ranch with the Manson family, a couple of wannabe members of the club being involved in the murder of Sharon Tate and her friends. In the UK there was an odd case in which the Sainsbury family, devout Christians were conned with other bigwigs into purchasing satanic artefacts that would then be destroyed in order to save the soul of a young girl, culminating in the purchase of an ornately carved satanic throne. It wasn't unusual for some of the heavier bike clubs to have a few satanic aficionados in their midst so the Sainsbury story was a mix of all this, though it's possible that the biker element of the story was peripheral or even non-existent, added after the event just to make a more lurid story.

The Rolling Stones of course dabbled in violence and the occult for a while and had a strong biker following in their earlier days, hiring 'Hell's Angels' as security for the 1969 Hyde Park concert in memory of Brian Jones, though looking at the footage most of these so-called Angels appear to be teenage boys with a couple of old rockers thrown in. I presume their garb and insignia were copied from the cover of an edition of Hunter Thompson's book. When the Stones did the same thing at Altamont later that year, the results were not so harmless – though the killing of Meredith Hunter did not, as many people seem to think, occur during the performance of "Sympathy for the Devil".

While Toase correctly identifies (as others have) the military connection to the outlaw biker gangs, there is a bohemian influence too. Thompson notes this in some of the US outlaws, particularly those who were enthusiastic users of LSD. This bohemian influence occurred in the UK as well, partly through contact between the bikers and counterculture personalities like Mick Farren and members of Hawkwind. My own involvement also suggests other influences that encouraged an interest in the occult: partly the more rural nature of the biker scene in the UK, centred around the market towns and the road houses and cafés that grew up along the A roads, and in some cases the fact that the girlfriends and partners of bikers were often practising witches.

If I sound particularly primed on all this, it's because I have a particular interest in the origins of the British bike scene, the evolution from rocker to greaser to biker, the eventual, grudging acceptance and adoption of Jap bikes and the roadside stops and hangouts, all of which seem to be disappearing along with a certain kind of shop where you used to be able to get dubious WWII regalia, knives, skulls and patches with obscure and private meanings all of which seems of a piece with the occult influence. Sadly, this all seems to be on a forgotten and neglected B road, superseded by the digital superhighway where any serious club must have a website, though I have heard it's different up north.

"I hate to advocate drugs, alcohol, violence or insanity to anyone, but they've always worked for me." Hunter S Thompson

Bob Smith
Maidstone, Kent

IT HAPPENED TO ME...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Notorious locations

About nine at night on a blustery spring evening around five years ago, I was a passenger in the front seat of a car being driven home by my stepson. On a stretch of old Roman road between Doncaster and Wakefield in Yorkshire, bordered on both sides by woodland, I was talking to my stepson when I saw in my peripheral vision a human-shaped figure running across the road and caught in the headlights of our car and another travelling in the opposite direction. It took a few seconds for me to register what I thought would be an inevitable collision, then to register that nothing of the kind had happened. My stepson had not seen anything. The figure I saw was a black silhouette and its movements very jerky like an old cinema reel. I mentioned what I had seen to my stepson and he said the road was "notorious" for similar sightings and for fatal crashes.

The second strange incident happened in broad daylight. I was visiting my mother who lives in a village called Drybrook in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire. It was a pleasant day – early summer, I think, as there was full leaf cover on the trees – and I had decided to go for a walk along the road heading past the local church. It is bordered by woodland on both sides, a very busy two-way highway, much used by lorries avoiding tolls on the Severn Bridge. There was no pavement and I was starting to feel it would be safer to get off the grass verge and head into the woods.

I was about to take a path into the woods when I noticed a man on the path ahead of me around 50 to 100 yards from the road – far enough away that I could not see his face clearly but close enough to assess he was a heavy-set man in his 40s wearing tracksuit bottoms and a T-shirt. He headed towards the undergrowth and tree line in a slightly odd way, and I wondered

DAN KITWOOD / GETTY IMAGES

what he was doing. I figured he might be with a dog, going to relieve himself perhaps... I hung back a bit because I was suddenly conscious of being a lone female.

As I approached the point where he had vanished, I scanned the undergrowth, but he had disappeared. I then realised that the undergrowth of bracken and brambles was so dense that he would have caught his clothing on it and made a lot of noise, whereas he seemed to have melted away with no sound. He never reappeared and it would have been tricky for him not to double back on himself at any point – and he would have to have moved very fast to reach a different path once clear of the woods. When I told my mother what I had seen, she said the stretch of road was another "notorious" crash site.

Miriam Hawkins
Wakefield, West Yorkshire

Sentient bus

Back in 2003/04 I was a student at the University of Manchester. Whenever I had early lectures, which was most days, I'd get a lift to Uni with my dad, as he was commuting to work at Salford College, not too far from the University. The journey from home to Manchester would take anywhere between 25 and 40 minutes. Virtually every day we would pass the same bus, in motion, at the exact same spot on John Dalton Street, just after crossing Deansgate. (I only remember this not being the case on two or three occasions during the year.) It was initially uncanny, then eerie, then eventually it just became the norm. A perpetual glitch in the matrix, everyday déjà vu. It didn't matter whether we left the house 10 minutes early or 10 minutes late, whether the traffic was gridlocked or the roads empty, we would pass this same bus at the same point in the road. Given the unpredictable nature of motorists, weather, diversions etc., no amount of planning could replicate such an odd occurrence. To put it into perspective, there were other significantly more frequent buses that took the same route out of town as this particular bus, but we would only pass these occasionally and never at an identical spot in the road.

Today the July issue of FT dropped on my doormat, and I had a quick flick through whilst still standing at the front door. To my utter astonishment, one of the first things I saw [**FT355:57**] was a picture of a bus: The X43! The same, almost certainly sentient, bus I passed virtually every day 13 years ago. To my further astonishment, the accompanying article informed me that it was the conveyance of choice of Jenny Randles's psychokinetic grandmother and its route passes through areas of keen fortean interest! Make of that what you will.

David A Hunt
Manchester

Significant Dragonflies

My father-in-law died five years ago. During his interment I was standing some distance away from his wife and their adult kids largely because I had the heebyjeebies about looking into the big dark hole that had been dug. It was intended eventually to be a double grave so it was even deeper than normal and in the dark and the pouring rain it wasn't a comforting sight.

I became aware that there was a very large, turquoise dragonfly flying around my father-in-law's immediate family group. It was there for quite some time while the service continued and flew in amongst them, but they seemed completely oblivious, as did the rest of the funeral party. I didn't mention it because, while I felt very strongly that it was in some way a sign from my father-in-law, they are staunch left footers and probably would not have liked the idea.

He was a man who had loved the seaside. Three years later, when we moved to live near the sea, we made a little pilgrimage down to the waterfront to celebrate. It was November and not, I should think, the season for dragonflies, but a large turquoise one turned up hovering around my husband. Once again, my husband was oblivious – but this may just be because he is always spectacularly unobservant. Whatever the reason, I didn't mention it – he doesn't have much interest in strangeness.

Catharine Gaskell
By email

READER INFO

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £48; Europe £58; USA $89.99 ($161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £68.
Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

NORTH AMERICA (US & CANADA)

Subscribers should contact: IMS. 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 800-428 3003 (toll free); Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, EUROPE & REST OF WORLD

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times**, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.

Telephone payments and queries: 0330 333 9492.
E-mail payments and queries: customercare@subscribe.forteantimes.com

HOW TO SUBMIT

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by *FT* readers and contributors in any medium or format.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteantimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO Box 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsutton@forteantimes.com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate.

LETTERS

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteantimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND REVIEW MATERIAL

Send to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP.

CAVEAT

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. *FT* can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.

CLIPSTERS WANTED!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 1 NOVEMBER 2017. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK
E-mail: sieveking@forteantimes.com
or post on the FT website at www.forteantimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.

WHY *FORTEAN*?

FORTEAN TIMES is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon, Janet Wilson. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Terry W Colvin. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

FORT SORTERS

(who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)
Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Chris Hill, Chris Josiffe, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

CLIPPING CREDITS FOR FT360

Richard Alexander, Gerard Apps, Rob Avery, David V Barrett, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Joanne Bourne, Rob Chambers, Brian Chapman, Peter Christie, Terry Colvin, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Graham Cordon, Mat Coward, Mike Dash, Eric Ebeling, John H Evans, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Richard George, Alan Gibb, Hugh Henry, Nigel Herwin, Martin Jenkins, Richard Lowke, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Mason, Greg May, David McCullough, Andy Munro, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Tony Smith, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Pam Thornton, Chris Tye, Mike Wade, Len Watson, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, Janet Wilson, Gary Yates, Bobby Zodiac.

PHENOMENOMIX

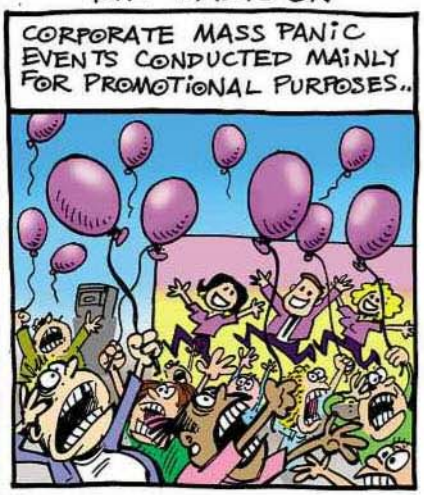
MASS PANICS

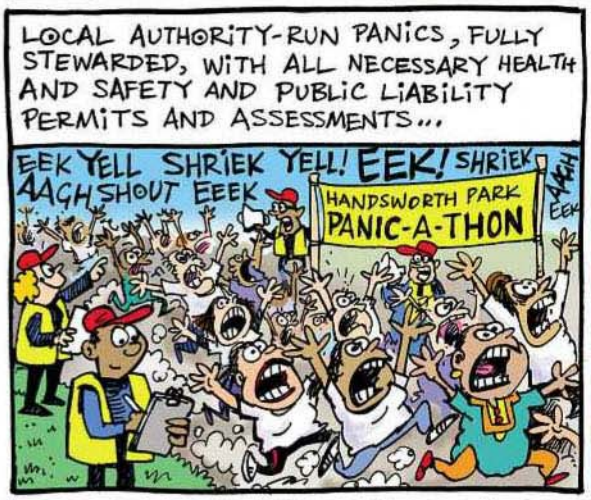
HUNT EMERSON

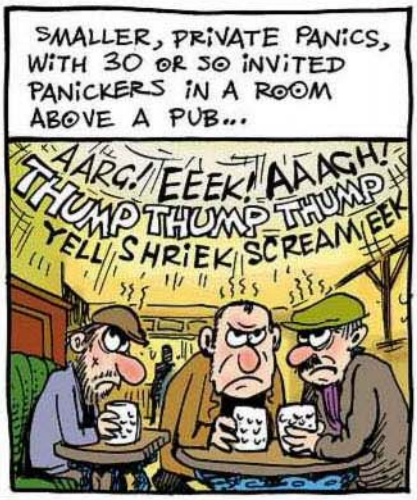
Invitation
YOU ARE INVITED TO A MASS PANIC ON JUNE 2nd·1PM OUTSIDE WALSALL PUBLIC LIBRARY. Dress: Formal R.S.V.P.
OH DEAR! THE MASS PANIC SEASON HAS STARTED!

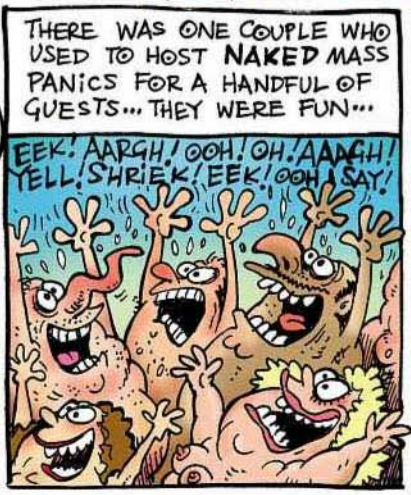
THREE MONTHS OF INVITATIONS TO SCREAM AND YELL IN TERROR... TO LOSE CONTROL OF SENSE OR REASON WITH A CROWD OF VIRTUAL STRANGERS...

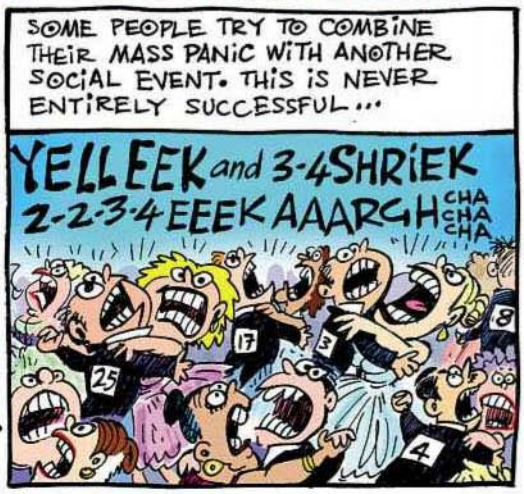
COMMUNITY MASS PANICS IN PUBLIC PARKS, WHERE EVERYONE IS EXPECTED TO "BRING A DISH" OF FOOD-ALL OF WHICH WILL BE TRAMPLED WHEN THE PANIC STARTS...
EEK!
MY CRAB DIP!
AAARGH!
MY NUT HUMMUS
AAGH!
YELL
EEK!




LOCAL AUTHORITY-RUN PANICS, FULLY STEWARDED, WITH ALL NECESSARY HEALTH AND SAFETY AND PUBLIC LIABILITY PERMITS AND ASSESSMENTS...
EEK YELL SHRIEK YELL! EEK! SHRIEK AAGH SHOUT EEEK
HANDSWORTH PARK PANIC-A-THON
AAGH
EEK




THERE WAS ONE COUPLE WHO USED TO HOST NAKED MASS PANICS FOR A HANDFUL OF GUESTS... THEY WERE FUN...
EEK! AARGH! OOH! OH! AAAGH!
YELL! SHRIEK! EEK! OOH! SAY!


SOME PEOPLE TRY TO COMBINE THEIR MASS PANIC WITH ANOTHER SOCIAL EVENT. THIS IS NEVER ENTIRELY SUCCESSFUL...
YELL EEK and 3-4 SHRIEK
2-2-3-4 EEEK AAARGH
CHA CHA CHA

*CATCHPHRASE OF THE MONTH.

AND SO IT GOES ON UNTIL LATE-SEPTEMBER, WHEN THERE IS A GREAT, COUNTRY-WIDE PANIC, HEADED BY RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL FIGURES AND WELL-KNOWN NAMES FROM THE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT, BY THE END OF WHICH EVERYONE IS AT SUCH A PITCH OF PANIC THAT THEY MELT INTO PUDDLES OF GREASE!

WHICH LEADS NICELY INTO THE POLITICAL CONFERENCE SEASON...

COMING NEXT MONTH

PARANORMAL RANGERS

INVESTIGATING ANOMALIES ON A NEW MEXICO RESERVATION

POLITICS AND POLTS

GHOST STORIES AND THE CONSERVATIVE IMAGINATION

+

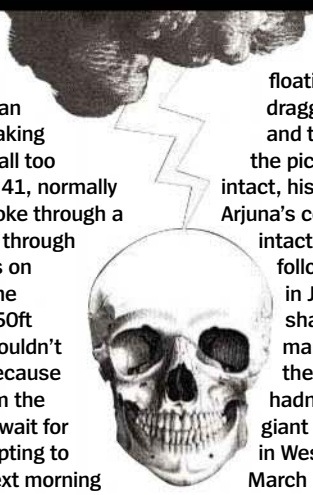
FORT LETTERS FOUND, FAIRY CENSUS UPDATE, DEL TORO'S MONSTERS, AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 361

ON SALE 7 DEC 2017

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL



A man died after running into a fire at the Burning Man Festival in Nevada, thus making the name of the gathering all too literal. Aaron Joel Mitchell, 41, normally resident in Switzerland, broke through a security perimeter and ran through two sets of security guards on 2 September to dive into the wooden effigy engulfed in 50ft (15m) flames. Fire crews couldn't get to him straight away because of burning wood falling from the structure, and they had to wait for it to collapse before attempting to rescue him. He died the next morning after being airlifted to a burn centre in California. Fires were cancelled that day, but the "Temple" burn, which ends the nine-day event, did take place. Mitchell had not been drinking, but a toxicology report was pending. More than 50,000 people attended the nine-day festivities. Burning Man describes itself as a community and takes place in Black Rock Desert in Nevada. It follows 10 main principles including civic responsibility, participation, immediacy and "leaving no trace". It launched in 1986 in San Francisco but switched to Nevada in 1990. *BBC News, 4 Sept; Sun, 5 Sept 2017.*

Care assistant Katie Widdowson, 24, told doctors she had hurt her wrist after agreeing to be restrained by her boyfriend during a sex game on New Year's Day. At the Good Hope Hospital in Sutton Coldfield she was diagnosed with a simple strain and sent home with painkillers, but developed blisters the next day and suffered a heart attack caused by the infection as she was being taken to another hospital by ambulance. The mother of one from Castle Vale in Birmingham was actually suffering from the flesh-eating bug necrotising fasciitis and died from a bacterial infection shortly afterwards. At the inquest, coroner Emma Brown said Ms Widdowson could have been saved if doctors had recognised the signs – including high blood pressure and raised heartbeat – and had kept her under observation. *telegraph.co.uk, 23 July; Metro, 24 July 2017.*

Suprianto, an Indonesian shaman, attempted to use his supernatural powers to locate the body of a teenager called Arjuna who had been attacked by a crocodile in Muara Jawa lake the previous day. The lake is in Kutai Kartanegara, Kalimantan. Suprianto swam into the lake and began to chant, but video footage shows him being dragged under the water mid-mantra. Local police chief Fadillah Zulkarnaen said that Suprianto was found floating at 9.40pm. "'I think he was dragged by a croc under the water and then ran out of oxygen. From the pictures I've seen, his body is still intact, his arms and legs are still there." Arjuna's corpse was also recovered intact. The gruesome incidents followed an attack in Kalimantan in July, which also involved a shaman. A crocodile had killed a man after reportedly answering the shaman's call, even though he hadn't gone into the water. And a giant python swallowed a man while in West Sulawesi, Indonesia, last March [FT359:80]. *D.Mail online, 19 Sept 2017.*

Paul McClean, 24, a *Financial Times* journalist, was eaten by a crocodile on 14 September after being pulled underwater at a popular surfing spot in Sri Lanka known locally as Elephant Rock. He had walked off into the jungle to urinate, and was washing his hands in the lagoon when he was seized. Eyewitnesses said he was seen frantically waving his hands before disappearing. His body was later recovered from the mud. *D.Express, 15 Sept; D.Mail, 16 Sept 2017*.

Antidepressants have been linked to 28 reports of murder and 32 cases of murderous thoughts, in cases referred to the UK medicines regulator over the past 30 years. The pills, known as Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), which include common drugs such as Prozac and Seroxat, are prescribed 40 million times each year in Britain, and are known to trigger violent mood swings. Pfizer, which developed the SSRI Sertraline, said that a causal link between it and homicidal behaviour has not been established. *D.Telegraph, 26 July 2017.*

Police have been investigating whether Daniel Brandon, 31, an experienced snake handler, was killed by his pet python. His body with "serious injuries" was found at his home in Church Crookham, Hampshire, on 25 August. The huge Burmese python was found near him, out of its pen and an inquest found that he had died from asphyxiation. Pythons kill by wrapping themselves around their prey and squeezing tighter and tighter, but according to Surrey and Hampshire Reptile Rescue: "There's never been a case of a python killing someone in Britain before. They only kill what they eat." However, pythons have been held responsible for fatalities in other parts of the world. *BBC News, Guardian online, 25 Sept 2017.*

How To Work From Home As A Writer!

What our students say:

"I'm currently working on my fourth book, have been paid for my writing by at least 15 different magazines, and now earn half my income from writing – all thanks to The Writers Bureau's course."

Sarah Plater

"I enrolled in The Writers Bureau's Creative Writing course in the hope of building my confidence as a writer and ending my cycle of publishing failures. I currently work as a content writer with a writing agency and have even won a writing competition."

Walter Dinjos

"I won the 2015 Flirty Fiction Prima Magazine and Mills and Boon competition. The prize was £500, a three page feature in the magazine and the chance to work with Mills and Boon on my book. Also I have three stories in three anthologies with other authors – we've raised almost £2,000 for cancer charities"

Rachel Dove

""I have been published in different papers and magazines and am now producing around 250 articles a year. It's going a bit too well at times! Seriously, it's very satisfying, stimulating and great fun – and thanks again to the WB for launching me on a second career. I meet so many interesting people and count myself mightly lucky."

Martin Read

"If you listen to the tutors and take time to read the material you can be a working writer, it really is an excellent course. I've found part-time work as a freelance writer for Academic Knowledge. I've earned just under £2000 in the past year."

Steph Thompson

"I am delighted to tell everyone that the course is everything it says on the tin, excellent! I have wanted to write for years, and this course took me by the hand and helped me turn my scribblings into something much more professional. I am delighted that my writing is being published and I am actually being paid. All thanks to the Comprehensive Creative Writing course."

George Stewart

Being a writer can offer you a second income, extra spending money or it can even be a full-time career. It's your choice. But whatever your writing ambitions, we have a course that will help you to achieve them.

That's because our first-class home-study creative writing course contains all you need to know to become a successful, published writer. You learn how to write articles, short stories, novels, TV, radio, drama and more. You are shown how to develop your writing style, present your manuscripts, contact editors, find markets and HOW TO SELL YOUR WORK.

What's more, you do not need any previous writing experience to succeed on the course as it's suitable for the absolute beginner.

Throughout the course you will be **tutored by a professional writer**, who will offer constructive feedback on your twenty marked assignments. In addition, you can count on the support of our dedicated Student Services team who will do all they can to ensure that you get the most out of your studies.

When you enrol, your full course is sent to you on a **fifteen day trial**. Your studies are then flexible to your requirements. Moreover, we offer you a **full refund guarantee.** If you do not earn back the equivalent of your fees by the time you finish your course we will refund them in full.

So, if you would like to learn how to earn from writing, try our risk-free course. For a free prospectus visit our website or call our freephone number TODAY!

www.writersbureau.com

FREE CALL 24 ☎ HRS **0800 856 2008** Quote: **AT1217**

YES! Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG
The Writers Bureau
Dept AT1217
Manchester, M3 1LE

TRUSTPILOT

Writers Bureau 28 Years of Success

www.facebook.com/thewritersbureau
www.twitter.com/writersbureau

Members of BILD and ABCC

email: 17W1@writersbureau.com Please include your name and address

Enrol online to access your course modules TODAY at: www.writersbureau.com

$4.99
PER ISSUE

A
MONSTER
APP

THE **WORLD'S #1 HORROR MAGAZINE**
IS NOW AVAILABLE PRIOR TO NEWSSTANDS
ON **iPHONE**, **iPAD**, **iPOD TOUCH** AND **PC/MAC.**
NOW WITH BONUS CONTENT, AUDIO AND VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS AND LOTS MORE!

VISIT RUE-MORGUE.COM OR THE APP STORE

FOLLOW US ON **INSTAGRAM**, **TWITTER** AND **FACEBOOK**